Supreme Court issues 2 writs of habeas data

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE LATEST JOURNAL ENROLLMENT from the Supreme Court is intended to protect a person's right to information privacy in being put to a test.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued two writs of habeas data directing the Court of Appeals to hear on March 18 separate petitions by Ayala Foundation executive Guillermo Luz and Amaryllis member Francis Saez seeking the destruction of information.

LIFESTYLE / C1
Debonair chefs whip up dishes to sweep their women off their feet

NEWS / A2
Jamby blocks promotion of 24 generals, colonels

WORLD / A24
NY Gov. Spitzer spent $80K on prostitutes, investigators say

WORLD / A23
Admiral in charge of Iraq, Afghan quit over Bush policy

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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, March 13, 2008 ## Tuesday / Vol. 23 / No. 97 P18 www.inquirer.net

Ben's 'borjor' that ZTE made bestseller 'to-die-for'

By Kristine L. Alave

China hit for blocking bill

Cuenco says Beijing expressed displeasure over HB 3216

By Norman Bordadora and Michael Lim Ubac

BEIJING'S APPARENT influence on the continued delay of the House of Representatives' final approval of the bill defining Philippine territorial baselines was raised yesterday by Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco.

In a news forum, Cuenco, chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, said Chinese Charge d'Affaires Dong Jijun met with him in January to express Beijing's displeasure over the passage of House Bill No. 3216 on second reading last December. The bill defines Philippine territory to include the Kalayaan Islands and Scarborough Shoal (to the disputed Spratlys).

Cuenco also said he had received from the Philippine Embassy in China

POINTS OF REFLECTION The La Mesa Ecopark cap will be the focal point of the capital jungle that is Quezon City. A 33-ha public park located outside the boundaries of the watershed and 45 meters below the reservoir (primary source of drinking water for Metro residents) was renovated by Ramon Ballesteros in partnership with the MWSS and the local government. It opened in 1904 and, with picnic tables and a lagoon, the park has become a favorite weekend destination for families on a budget. JOAN BONDOC

Marcos victims upbeat on US SC review

HUMAN RIGHTS VICTIMS OF THE regime of Ferdinand Marcos expressed confidence on Wednesday they would win a US Supreme Court review on a dispute with the Philippine government over who owns money allegedly stolen by the late dictator.

The court is set to hear oral arguments on Monday on claims by the Philippine government and human rights victims to $35 million in Marcos assets.

The government asked the justices to take the case after two US courts awarded the funds to nearly 10,000 victims of Marcos' 20-year rule.

The lawsuit stems from an account set up with a $2 million deposit by

GMA elated but Lacson not giving up on witness

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY EXpressed relief that a Senate inquiry failed to ensure confirmation from its "surprise witness" to alleged payoffs to the Hyatt Couple and sparked instead a potential confrontation between businessmen Fariñas Lacson and Juan Ponce Enrile.

Other sources were divided in their assessments of Sen Miguel's testimony.

In a TV interview, ousted Speaker Jose de Venecia shared the strained assessment of the witness.

"I don't want to dignify whatever he's saying. He's an agent of Malacañang, that's what many of the senators are saying," said De Venecia, whose businessman son Joey, a failed bidder for the $880 deal, had exposed alleged anomalies in the contract.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita quoted President Macapagal-Arroyo as saying "that's good" when he told her that the Senate hearing on the aborted $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China's ZTE Corp. on Tuesday got nothing from cable TV executive and ZTE consultant Locsin Miguel.

"She was elated," Ermita said. "So the drama unfolds, let's hope there is closure to it."

PMA alumni seek to abolish 'protector clause'

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

FORT DEL PILAR, BAGUIO CITY—419 lightened by commissioning Fr Joaquin Bernas, alumni of the Philippine Military Academy now agree that removing the "military as protector of the people clause" from the 1987 Constitution would discourage further false uprisings that involve the Armed Forces.

Maj. Gen. Leopoldo Maligaya, PMA superintendent, said the alumni met with Bernas last December to discuss the content of Article II of the 1987 Constitution that defines the Armed Forces of the Philippines as "the protector of the people."

Section 3 of the article states: "Civilian authority is, at all times, supreme over the military. The Armed Forces of the Philippines is the protector of the people and the State. Its goal is to secure the sovereignty of the State and the integrity of the national territory."

Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes said

Zambo orphan is PMA 2008 valedictorian

By Vincent Cabreza and Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

FORT DEL PILAR, BAGUIO CITY—401 orphan from Zamboanga City is the valedictorian of the Philippine Military Academy's 108-member "Maghawal" (Stepping Maker ng Lahi) Class of 2008.

Cadet First Class Ariel Rellon, 25, and five others leading Scout Ministers topped this year's batch of graduates of the PMA.

Graduating magna cum laude, Rellon will receive the Presidential Saber from President Macapagal-Arroyo, the guest

Rains, floods continue to batter Eastern Samar

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

GUIUAN, EASTERN SAMAR—LIKE THE friars of Batuses, the Mercy of Eastern Samar are accustomed to typhoons.

Exposed as they are to the whims of the Pacific Ocean, the Mercy do not fear the rain. In fact, they depend on it to irrigate their fields and replenish their supply of drinking water.

But this year has been radically different, particularly for Dolores, the largest rice-producing municipality of Eastern Samar.

Fr. Bongabong Jobilon, head of the

St. Joachim parish in Dolores, said that for the first time in the town's history the rains brought much more destruction than covered the vast rice fields, wiping out the crop.

The lawmaker initially thought the heavy downpour on Feb. 16, which was attributed to the prevalent cold front and the La Niña weather phenomenon, was nothing out of the ordinary.

But the rains continued to pound the province, so that by Feb. 18 the flood had inundated the highest barrio in Dolores, reaching the rooftops in the lower barangays.

LET IT NOT BE FORGOT Can't miss it. Scrawled on the perimeter wall at Adamson University on San Marcelino Street in Manila is apparently a reminder for students of the past several months, which refers to the scandal-ridden NBN-ZTE project.

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Manila	Partly cloudy	Baguio	Partly cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy	Iba	Partly cloudy
Legaspi	Partly cloudy	Puerto Princesa	Mostly cloudy
Tacloban	Partly cloudy	Cebu	Partly cloudy
Dipolog	Mostly cloudy	Davao	Partly cloudy
Cagayan de Oro	Partly cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly cloudy

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Court junks Joey Marquez appeal

Ex-Parañaque mayor fails to overturn graft conviction

By Jocelyn R. Uy

FORMER PARAÑAQUE MAYOR Joey Marquez is still going to jail as far as the Sandiganbayan is concerned.

The antigraft court's Fourth Division yesterday junked with finality his petition to overturn its decision finding him guilty of five counts of graft in connection with the overpriced purchase of ₱2.94-million worth of "radio ringing" (broomsticks) in 1996 and 1997.

In a 41-page ruling penned by Associate Justice Jose Hermosisima, the Sandiganbayan junked three issues raised by Marquez in seeking a reversal of its August 2007 decision that convicted him of graft and sentenced him to up to 10 years in jail.

Also found guilty over Isaias City Treasurer Silvestre de Leon, ex-city accountant Marilou Tamael and City Engineer Ernesto Ramos in charge of the city's general services office.

They were ordered to pay ₱442,704 representing the overpriced amount to the government of U.S. $13 broomsticks, which the Commission on Audit found out to be bought at either ₱1 or ₱20 each.

But the court's decision has not yet jailed since he died before the promulgation. Tamael was acquitted after the court found merits in her motion for reconsideration.

A month after his conviction, Marquez, through his lawyer Noel Sibulan, filed a motion for reconsideration pointing out that the prosecution had misplaced an "incorrect legal theory" in order to win a conviction.

Asking for a retrial, Malaya also earlier said that his client must be allowed to present evidence showing that his signature in the documents that passed him down—disbursement vouchers and purchase orders...were forged.

Malaya also pointed out that the prosecution committed serious misconduct in the litigation by filing five informations against Marquez "where a clear view that they were accusing his client of overpricing by way of splitting of purchase orders...under the said theory, there should have been only one offense charged for all the multi-ringing runs," Malaya had argued.

However, the court maintained in its ruling that the five informations were based on the number of purchase contracts entered into by the city government under Marquez.

The court also noted that Marquez did not bring up the "forged signatures" on the vouchers during the preliminary investigation. He also failed to point out which documents contained the fake signatures.

"It also never gave any reason or particular detail for his claim that the signatures were forged. In fact, in his motion-affidavit, he affirmed that 'the purchase orders reflect the name and signature of [Commission on Audit] signing officer, [Marquez] as mayor and [De Leon] as municipal treasurer,'" the court said.

The court likewise dismissed Marquez's argument that there was conflict of interest when it decided on his case last August because the wife of the court's chair Justice Gregory Ong was a financial liaison officer for Marquez's former city mayor Florencio Aberasturi.

Aberasturi, who was Marquez's predecessor as mayor, was also charged with graft in connection with the purchase of the broomsticks but died before the case was filed in court.

"Ong's wife's relationship with Aberasturi is too remote to be considered as a ground for disqualification," the court said.

Marquez's camp has yet to comment on the ruling.

Jamby blocks promotion of 24 generals, colonels

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY Commission on Appointments gagged up on Sen. Jamby Madrigal, whom they accused of being capricious, for deliberately delaying the promotion of 24 military officials during the last plenary session of the CA yesterday.

To the chagrin of her fellow CA members, Madrigal made true her word to invoke Section 20 of their rules to subsequently summon to get back at her colleagues for opposing the appointment of Brig. Gen. Nestor Sadiarin, chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Civil Relations Service.

Madrigal had slammed the move not given chance to invoke Section 20 to oppose Sadiarin's appointment, but other CA members said Madrigal did not make her objection on time.

Section 20 allows a CA member to move for the reinspection of the CA action on any appointment, if there it is not deliberated, Section 20 is rarely invoked, courts less involved wholesale.

The appointment of 17 generals and 7 colonels was up for confirmation yesterday, the issue it was the last session day before the Holy Week break, their appointment would be taken up when Congress resumes session on April 28.

Yesterday, CA members took turns to first appeal and later on their duties. Madrigal for ignoring the record of the military officers up for promotion.

Spoiled brat

Sen. Richard Gordon delivered the worst tirade.

"We're not spoiled brats here and all kinds of bumps will not get you anywhere. You have to argue with our emotion," he said after Madrigal summoned her colleagues to explain her earlier "treachery."

"Today I am witness to a damnedly lame of Section 20. No one can accuse us of not looking into the individual qualifications of those subject of whom have risked their lives for democracy," said Gordon.

"There are children of people who are not as well heeled as the grandlady... We do not want to be seen as disrespecting the uniform of the military to be seen as being in every way," he went on.

Gordon said Madrigal did not even bother to question each of the officers during the committee hearings.

"I am not suggesting people here have lost their facial removal. We have the respect of this nation if we tolerate this," Gordon went on against Madrigal's objections.

An impassioned Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, a former military chief, questioned Madrigal's use of Section 20, saying most of the officers were qualified for promotion.

"The senator is wondering why we have been judged fit to lead is she denied Section simply because we have a question in the present, ngo to this commission," he said, banging his fist on the podium.

'Sense of duty'

"I have risked my life for this country. I cannot blame those if the men in uniform will ask, 'Is this the institution I am risking my life for?,'" he continued.

At her turn, Madrigal did not give any specific objections except to say she was invoking Section 20 "on a sense of principle, out of as a sense of duty."

"I'm willing to be shot by these gentlemen because I am standing on my principle and one consequence and very sign. Kinawawang kaya supreme power dahil wala silang pakiusa sa CA, ang mga nakakilala sa kanila [those who can't be present, of because they don't have patience at the CA, those who are detained at home]," she said, referring to soldiers charged with coup.

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Spratlys deal nothing to worry about – FVR

By Terra Quimundo

FORMER PRESIDENT FIDEL RAMOS YESterday allayed fears over the government's joint oil exploration deal with China in the Spratlys, saying bilateral and multilateral agreements have long been in place to ensure the peaceful resolution of border disputes.

"We should not panic... Because there is so much goodwill already built up among the claimants especially between China, who is the big power in this area, and the other claimants," Ramos said in an interview.

After addressing an international forum on the Asian Charter, Ramos told reporters yesterday that the controversial Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU) should not be a cause for concern since talks on cooperative China would hasten previous agreements made to create the non-violent resolution of lingering border questions on the Spratly islands.

"Do na nga manda ngayon eh. (The world is different now) We are not invading each other with warplanes, and naval boats and missiles. Wala na yan... (That's over) Let's not panic because we've been through worse times before," Ramos said.

The JMSU is an agreement between the Philippines and China in 2004 for a preseismic study of the disputed Spratlys for oil and gas reserves. Vietnam later joined the deal. Other Spratly claimants are Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei.

Former Senator Franklin Drilon had called the deal a "sellout" as he alleged that the deal was signed in exchange for millions of dollars in Chinese investments and loan grants to the Philippines.

When asked about the JMSU during the forum, Ramos said "it would be of China's greatest interest" to achieve to the bilateral and multilateral agreements that claimant countries had forged in previous years.

As guarantees, he cited a 1992 Philippine-China agreement, a 1996 bilateral code of conduct between the two countries, a separate Vietnam-China agreement and, most recently, a code of conduct signed at the level of the association of Southeast Asian Nations.

When asked about his comment on challenges to JMSU's constitutionality, Ramos said:

"Let us first identify properly what was undertaken by these three oil companies," Ramos said.

Army general may face court-martial

By Alcuin Papa

A MILITARY GENERAL suspended by the Ombudsman for allegedly extorting money from applicants to the armed forces is now the subject of a pre-trial investigation by military authorities.

If probable cause is found, Maj. Gen. Jose Barbosa, commander of the Army's 10th Infantry Division based in Cagayan de Oro, will face court-martial.

He would be the highest military official ever charged for alleged corruption since the 2005 crisis of AFP comptroller Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia.

Philippine Army Commanding General Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano said yesterday the military's Judge Advocate General's Office (JAGO) is studying whether Barbosa can be charged with violating Article of War 96 or conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ **COURT GRILLS** Lozada sis /A7

■ **MIRIAM'S** report to seek OK of RP-Japan pact /A5

Lakas-Kampi union not meant to keep GMA in power – Nograles

By TJ Burgonio

SPEAKER PROSPERO NOgrales yesterday denied speculations that the proposed merger of the ruling Lakas-CMD and the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi) was designed to keep President Macapagal-Arroyo in power.

Nograles, the newly elected Lakas president, said the merger was intended to produce a "powerhouse coalition" in the 2010 presidential election, and not to amend the Charter.

"Charter change has nothing to do with this. Let's make it clear. The President will not shorten her term and the Presidency will not extend her term. No shortening of term, or extension of term," he told reporters.

Nograles was reacting to claims that the proposed merger was meant to make the House of Representatives solidly behind any move to amend the Constitution, and extend the President's term beyond 2010.

The President endorsed the merger at last Monday's Lakas-CMD national directorate, predicting that the merged party would be a "cohesive" that would dominate Philippine politics after 2010.

"Claims that the merger is designed to push for another Cha-cha are absolutely false and illogical. On the contrary, we want this merger to prepare us for the 2010 elections," he said.

"We want to unify two of the country's biggest political parties so that we can have a powerhouse slate in 2010, from Senator to Barangay. So how come they are saying that this merger is for the Cha-cha?" he added.

The Speaker declared that Cha-cha would not prosper unless his wants, and said if any to should take place after 2010.

He said the President shared his position, and wasn't keen on pushing Cha-cha.

Nograles said that any bill proposing a shift from presidential form of government to parliamentary among others, would be treated like any measure.

"It will be treated just like the other measures that are being filed every day by any colleague in the House but certainly, we have to prioritize bills that are listed under our legislative priority agenda and Cha-cha is not one of them, "he said.

Despite the President's marching orders, officials of Kampi were not receptive to the idea of a merger mainly over concern of which party should emerge as the dominant party.

Corrections

IN THE MARCH 6 issue, a filipina story on Page A19—"18 hurt in Quezon City market demolition"—contained a couple of erroneous information. It misspelled the name of one of those injured in a recent demolition operation of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority in Quezon City. His name is Silvestre Macle—not Marid.

The same article misstated Marie's former position in the Philippine Collegian, the official student paper of the University of the Philippines. She is a former business editor...not editor-in-chief.

IN THE MARCH 12 issue, a photo caption on Page A10 misspelled the name of the secretary of the budget and management. The budget secretary's name is Rolando...not Rolan do—Andaya.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Ray Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Building, Chino Roces Avenue, Corner Mc-Kinley Road, Makati City, Tel No. 897-1700, e-mail address: dailyinq@inq.net.ph

Pampanga ex-mayor acquitted in graft case

By Jocelyn R. Uy

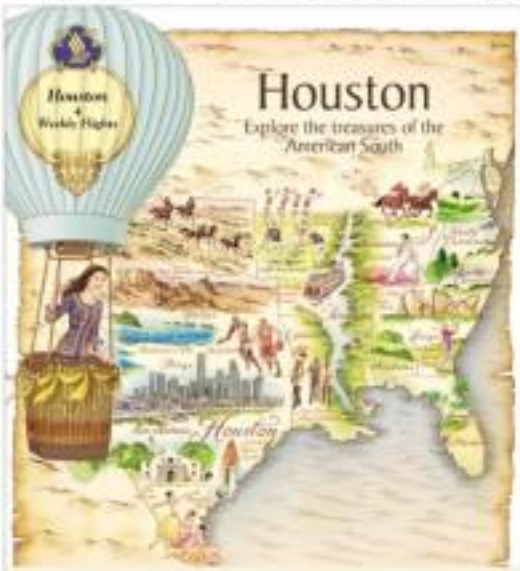
THE SANDIGANBAYAN 5th Division acquitted a former town mayor in Pampanga of graft charges in connection with the purchase and sale of 500 cavans of rice allegedly overpriced by P500,000 in 2002.

In a 22-page decision, the antigraft court's fifth division acquitted former Candaba Mayor Nicomedes Evangelista, saying the prosecution failed to substantiate its charge.

Government prosecutors had said Evangelista gave unwarranted benefits to two rice dealers by writing a letter to the National Food Authority requesting purchase of 1,000 sacks of rice for relief operations.

The letter supposedly allowed the two retailers—brothers Wilfredo and Armando Magalso—to buy 500 cavans, which is way beyond the 50-cavan limit per week. It was also alleged that the mayor profited by reselling the rice to their co-residents, contrary to the law.

But the mayor testified that she wrote the letter to NFA to promote a meeting not shortage brought about by the typhoons.



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Tue, Thu, Sat, Sun	2355	1800 (1730)	2205		Tue, Thu, Sat, Sun	2305	2000 (2230)	1905 (1835)	

CONCERNED ASSUMPTION WOMEN
In support of TRUTH AND STABILITY

In the face of the present political crisis caused by unsubstantiated allegations that have fomented calls for the resignation of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, we appeal to everyone to heed the voice of reason, sober analysis and, above all charity, in the search for truth.

We must not be swayed by the media frenzy that is fueled by a deliberate and unrelenting barrage of "revelations" that may ultimately fail the test of judicial admissibility due to lack of hard evidence. We must refuse to be manipulated by vested political interests and by those who stand to gain from chaos. Truth cannot be found in the streets with demands that result in social instability. We must uphold the rule of law and the interest of our nation above politics and personal agendas. We believe that the demand for good governance goes hand-in-hand with the practice of good citizenship which includes, among others, respect for the rule of law and for the rights of all.

Our resources must be geared towards strengthening our judicial institutions and democratic processes rather than spent on street rallies and protests that cause divisiveness.

In the interest of TRUTH and STABILITY we stand by the following:

- WE MUST MAKE EFFORTS TO DISCERN BETWEEN GENUINE CALLS FOR REFORMS AND ATTEMPTS TO ADVANCE SELF-INTERESTS THAT DERAIL OUR COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT.
- ALL EFFORTS TO SEEK THE TRUTH MUST BE SUPPORTIVE OF JUDICIAL AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES. THE UNCIVIL BEHAVIOR THAT WE HAVE BEEN WITNESS TO CAN NEVER SERVE AS THE WELLSPRING FOR TRUTH.
- INVESTIGATIONS ON CORRUPTION OF ANY FORM MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE AND TRANSPARENT. ALL THOSE WHO ARE ACCOUNTABLE MUST BE MADE TO FACE THE FULL FORCE OF THE LAW.
- THOSE WHO HAVE USED THE SENATE INVESTIGATIONS AS VENUE TO RUSH A CONDEMNATION OF THE ARROYO GOVERNMENT IN THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION, GAINING FREE POLITICAL MILEAGE IN THE PROCESS, MUST BE EXPOSED AND HELD ACCOUNTABLE.

We believe that in governance, the highest TRUTH that must be served is the GOOD OF THE PEOPLE and not the many versions and distortions of truth fainted by different paradigms and interests.

We believe that the GOOD OF THE PEOPLE will be best served by the President's staying on at the helm of government until she finishes her term in 2010 focused like a laser beam on the stability and economic growth that she hopes to leave as her legacy to the Filipino people.

This is her "ROEUTY TO DUTY," our Assumption motto that she enshrines in her heart.

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Amelia Abaya HS '84 Coll '88
Marilyn P. Abalo '81
Rey Heraldine Polanco-Abellada
Beatriz Cristina Vinzons-Abiera
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Amy Cu Unjieng '59
Antonette Carmen Cuyegkeng HS 86 Coll '70
Rosario Rosa Cuyegkeng HS '70 Coll '74
Katrina Geronimo Dalisi '91
Marivic Araneta David '87
Maricris H Dionisio HS 03
Gregorio Desquitado
Marilyn Reyes Sicat SG 67
Frances Dilao '90
Candice V. Dolay HS '74
Irene Domalaga '84
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Rose Espiritu Coll 2000
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Priscilla Lanuza Estrada
Cleo Estrellon
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Vicky Andrieni Farolan
Gloria Maria Fernandez HS '54
Ma. Elaine Cadiz Fernandez
Tulip Fernandez '88
Abigail Fernandez '00
Pompey Sanchez Flores '91
Ana Florendo HS 67
Margarita A. Fores
Sarah Flores
Carla Fraganillo '04
Marian de Guzman Fraganillo HS '98 Coll '99
Doisy R. Francisco
Ayleen Francisco
Nina Fuentebella HS '03
Inez Franco HS '66
Rosarosie Lychelle Frias Coll '96
Aurora L. Fuentebella HS 66 / Coll 64
Elsa Lanuza Fuentes '69
Celina Gabriel '88
Carolyn Limpoco San Gabriel '91
Marjorie Edrosojan Galindo
Lourdes Villaceiba Galvez
Ma. Joselin Gamboa
Teresita Josefina Gamboa HS '83
Margarita Lao Gamboa HS 71
Vicky Y. Gan HS 89
Rebecca Ganuza
Carmen Garcia '60
Ma. Raquel R. Garcia
Marga Rafio Garcia
Ma. Teresa R. Garcia
Ma. Regina Jaworski Garcia HS 67 Coll 71
Milagros H. Garcia '63
Rozelle Garcia '99
Liza Garrido
Ma. Perla Gregorena Gauzon '96
Perla Cayetano Gil '71
Ana Hernandez Gijares
Rosalie Buyson Guerrero coll 2000
Rosalina Buyson Guerrero coll 2000
Sonia Santiagodas HS '70
Carmen Arroyo Gonzalez
Beth Tiscia Gosiengfiao '75 Coll '79
Josephine Damian Gotauco HS '86, Coll '90
Patricia Gotauco '84
Mercedes C. Go HS 64
Isabel Gonzalez Gotauco '34
Imelda Santos Gomez
Chona L. Gonzaga HS 'Unsure 88
Cynthia R. Gonzalez HS '88, Coll '93
Milagros B. Gonzalez HS '88
Cynthia Gotauco '81
Charito J. Gregorio
Rosette Buyson Guerrero
Rosalina Buyson Guerrero
Isabel Fernandez Guevarra HS '60, Coll '67
Mercedes de Guzman
Laura Dumlao de Guzman HS '74
Rosalind Frial de Guzman '07
Lorraine Powell D'Hara HS '56
Benita Lumongsod-Halter
Ma. Irene Flores Eve
Petra Cayugan '46
Amy Cu Unjieng '59
Antonette Carmen Cuyegkeng HS 86 Coll '70
Rosario Rosa Cuyegkeng HS '70 Coll '74
Katrina Geronimo Dalisi '91
Marivic Araneta David '87
Maricris H Dionisio HS 03
Gregorio Desquitado
Marilyn Reyes Sicat SG 67
Frances Dilao '90
Candice V. Dolay HS '74
Irene Domalaga '84
Nena Ilian Dionisio
Rose Espiritu Coll 2000
Tess Espinosa HS '54
Priscilla Lanuza Estrada
Cleo Estrellon
Norma Estrellon HS '53
Juliet Medina Evangelista '89
Vicky Andrieni Farolan
Gloria Maria Fernandez HS '54
Ma. Elaine Cadiz Fernandez
Tulip Fernandez '88
Abigail Fernandez '00
Concepcion Javier HS '58
Sandra R. Jaboneta HS '80
Veronica Cortes Jamora HS '83, Coll '87
Rachelle Jaroo Coll 2000
Lourden L. Jandiano HS 84
Lenabelle V. Jovellanos HS '99 coll 02
Marilen Javier
Guadalupe E. Jurado HS 74 / Coll 78
Arabella de Jesus
Ma. Rosa Torre Jose HS 01
Sally Union Jose, HS '58
Dr. Carolina de Joya HS '84
Lorraine Lim HS '98
Teresa Inez Kalaw
Divina Angel Kalaw
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Maria Charina Kapahi '80
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Ana Lustrisima Litton
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Mary Llarena HS '98
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Cecilia de Los Reyes HS 57
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Ma. Regina Lopez HS '96
Ma. Teresa C. Lopez
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Sabina M. Lopez
Sandra Bautista Lopez
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Teresita Abad Lopez HS '63
Carmelo Lorenzo
Elizabeth Luz
Ma. Teresa Luz
Mary Anne Luz
Teresa Elizabeth HS '70, Coll '74
Mila Anne Luz HS 68
Cecile Magat
Cielito Lucelin Magat
Patricia Magat
Ma. Luisa Peñaflorida Magaldas HS '63, Coll '67
Christine Mallari, Coll 2000
Teresa Pedrosa Manahan
Cecilia Maria Manalo
Anna Lopez Mandrilla
Carmina Lim Manotoc
Sonia Singh Mamosa HS '63, Coll '67
Isabel Mañosa '60
Margot Sojuco Mañosa HS '59
Amelia Manuel
Lina Chingpao Maqui
Lani Dingen Maxx
Mila Dingen Maxx
Ma. Elena Buenaventura
Bessie Martin
Dulcinea Matti HS '80
Carmen S. McCash '90
Mercedes Lucena Melencio
Gloria Melencio HS '68
Victoria J. Mendoza HS '73
Enrico Mendoza
Rosario Paredes Mendoza
Lilibeth Mendoza
Margie Melvin '86
Ana Consolacion Mendoza
Ma. Lourdes Miguel '80
Karen Milanes
Jessica Z. Millan HS 90
Rose Mina
Mercy Salgado Mirafe
Marivic Mojica HS '73
Marilene Torres Molinyawe '73
Ana Concepcion Monasterio HS '84
Mary Monteiro '91
Alana Montelibano '03
Rosario A. Montemayor HS '59, Coll '63
Rosarosie A. Montemayor '95
Carlotta D. Montinola
Mila Luis Muñoz HS '62, Coll '66
Corazon Baltazar Hippocrates HS '79
Lolita Arpinita Nan
Tina Nakpil
Sheila Hernandez Nakpil
Lolita Nan
Hilda Flores Nanquinga HS '84, Coll '88
Amy C. Nandas HS '84
Lourdes Corpuz HS '84 Coll '88
Singay Santos Ordonez
Ana Maria Ortigas '91
Mary-Ai Osorio '89
Pamela Rocio de Guzman '96
Patricia de Guzman '96
Marianne A. Osorio
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Lucinda Villar
Elena Angeles Villaraza
Tina Villaraza
Lei Cruz Villaruel-Lu
Laura Malaya Vinluan '73
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Ma. Cristina Henson Vitug
Peachy Manansala Vitug '91
Remedios Rodao HS '69
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Sylvia Asencio Yap
Maria Concepcion Yap HS '87
Hunter Yaptangco
Rosario Cancio Yuseng
Cristina N. Yuvienco '81
Jun David Yuseng
Josephine Yuseng
Dina Zulueta HS '88
Evelyn Tadeo-Diaz Zulueta '90
Lucy Maria de Leon Zayco HS '81
Ma. Alma Lopez Zayco '81
Maricel Zayco '87
Ellen Zayco '87
Rosa Z. Zayco HS '86
Rosario Z. Zayco HS '86

'CONDITIONAL CONCURRENCE'

Miriam's report to seek OK of RP-Japan pact

SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO yesterday said she would be releasing a full committee report recommending that the Senate give "conditional concurrence" to the Japan Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (Jpepa) when Congress reopens on April 28.

"Ordinarily, a committee report is only two pages [long], bearing the signatures of committee members. But this time my committee report will be so extensive that it will be a bound volume. Jpepa is an extraordinary treaty raising significant issues of constitutional and international law," said Santiago, who chairs the Senate foreign relations committee.

The Jpepa—dubbed as a "new age" free trade agreement as it goes beyond the liberalization of trade in goods and services to include labor, capital and information, science and technology, human resource development, small and medium enterprises and the environment—has already been signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo and ratified by the Japanese parliament. But it has to be ratified by a two-thirds vote of the incumbent Senators.

Joint hearings

Santiago's foreign affairs committee and Sen. Manuel Roxas' trade and commerce committee conducted joint hearings into the Jpepa last year following objections from environmentalists and nationalists over its supposed environmental and constitutional infirmities.

The Roxas committee recommended approval as the country stood to lose more by rejecting the agreement as most of the Philippines' Asian neighbors have signed or are negotiating similar treaties with Japan.

The Santiago committee, which tackled the legality and constitutionality questions, recommended approval conditioned on an embargo of diplomatic notes between the Philippines and Japan, guaranteeing the supremacy of the Philippine Constitution over the treaty's provisions.

Parity rights

The constitutional issue questioned by quarters opposed to the Jpepa's passage, granting national treatment and most favored nation status and parity rights to Japanese investors.

Santiago earlier proposed a conditional concurrence consisting of an exchange of notes between the two governments with the Senate resolution to contain a statement that Jpepa would not violate Philippine constitutional provisions on property rights, protection against undue foreign competition, ownership of all lands of the public domain, utilization of all natural resources, etc.

Santiago said these constitutional issues were paramount and the Senate needed to ensure that the Supreme Court would not declare the Jpepa unconstitutional.

Vienna convention

"If we do not take scrupulous care in the Senate and the [high] court declares it unconstitutional, such declaration of unconstitutionality will not be a valid defense if Japan sues the Philippines for nonperformance of contract obligation. This is a provision of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties," the senator said.

She said she hoped that Japan would recognize the conditions without again submitting the Jpepa to the Japanese parliament for approval.

—GDC, Cebuexpress.ph

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Spratlys agreement unconstitutional, says law prof

By TJ Burgonio

THE AGREEMENT AMONG THE Philippines, China and Vietnam to conduct a seismic survey in the disputed Spratly Islands infringes on the Constitution and should be cancelled, a constitutional law professor said yesterday.

"What we did was give away our claim, and allow other countries to explore our natural resources," Prof. Edwin Lacierda of the Eastern University Institute of Law said in a phone interview.

Lacierda said the 2005 Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU) violated the Constitution by allowing two foreign nations to explore the Philippines' natural resources.

Under the fundamental law, exploration of Philippine resources is limited to Filipino or Filipino-owned corporations, he pointed out.

"It certainly totally is part of exploration. Under this agreement, you're violating the provision on exploration that is reserved for Filipinos and Filipino corporations," he said.

Lacierda also said the JMSU undermined Philippine sovereignty.

"By allowing other countries to explore our resources, we are weakening our sovereignty claim over the Spratlys. We are violating the Philippine Constitution," he said.

Circumvention

Curiously, he said, annexes to the agreement showed that it covered areas within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

Lacierda further said the Philippines' entanglement a contentious provision because President Macapagal-Arroyo delegated her authority to sign the agreement to Philippine National Oil Corp., a government-owned and -controlled corporation.

"The anchor location was a way of circumventing the constitutional requirement that the President must disclose or Congress a contract or explorations within 30 days from its execution," he said.

Lacierda said the government should cancel the agreement even at the risk of being charged with breach of consecutable international law.

"As the first officer of the land, the President has the prerogative to make sure all the laws are followed. She should cancel this. Otherwise, she can be impeached because she allowed this corporation (PNOC) to enter into a void contract," he said, adding:

"It is up to the Chinese to pursue whatever legal remedies they want."

A precondition for loans?

The Philippines and China signed a bilateral agreement in 2004 to conduct a joint seismic study of areas in the Spratlys. With the objection of Vietnam, another claimant, the JMSU was forged in 2005.

Senators and congressmen are seeking separate inquiries into the JMSU that would zero in on the accusation that it was a precondition for the grant of an $8-billion loan package from China.

China hit for blocking bill on defining RP baselines

Front page 4 »

a copy of a communication from the Chinese government dated December 2007. In the document, Beijing made reference to the Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU) among the Philippines, China and Vietnam after saying that the baselines bill might affect bilateral cooperation in the South China Sea.

"If the Philippine side forcefully puts Scarborough Shoal and some other Nansha reefs and islands inside the baseline of the Philippine territorial sea, it will not be conducive to the stability ... [and will] also disturb China-Philippine cooperation in the area," the document read in part.

It said the JMSU had achieved substantive progress and was "a historical breakthrough in handling the South China Sea issue."

But it also said the passage of HB 3216 on second reading at the House "does not conform to the common interest of our two countries, nor does it serve the interest of the Philippines."

"China is shocked by and gravely concerned with this negative development. We request clarification from the Philippine side," said the document titled "Talking Points," a copy of which was furnished the media.

One of the lawyers that signed against the passage of the bill was economic lawyer Rambon Mendoza, a former solicitor general.

SEA CHANGE Seeing aside the affairs of state, President Arroyo goes to the water's edge in Morong, Bataan, to release 48 baby sea turtles on Wednesday. The turtle hatchlings were bred by the Turtle Conservation Center to promote the dwindling population of the endangered turtles.

Certified urgent

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that in order to put to rest insinuations that through the JMSU, President Macapagal-Arroyo might have waived the Philippines' claim over part of the Spratlys, she would notify the bill's passage as urgent.

Ermita said at a press conference that the Commission on Multilateral and Ocean Affairs (CMOA), a Cabinet-level office under the Office of the President, had been quietly documenting the Philippines' baselines in preparation for submission to the United Nations of the country's claim for an extended continental shelf by May 2009.

"But before we can prepare the position for an extended continental shelf, we must first determine the actual Philippine baselines," said Ermita.

The CMOA is headed by the executive secretary as chair and the secretaries of justice and of foreign affairs as vice chairs.

Leaders of the opposition in the House have linked the delay in the passage of HB 3216 to the JMSU, the contract for which and propriety of which is now being questioned by legal experts and lawmakers.

No public disclosure yet

But Ermita told reporters that the contents of the JMSU could not be publicly disclosed just yet.

He said he was not the right time to release the contents of the JMSU to the public because it would preempt congressional inquiries into the matter.

"Part of the [Department of Justice] advice is tying the document [in the congressional inquiries]," he said, adding that as for its public disclosure, "that has yet to be decided."

But he said that "at the time," the contents of the tripartite agreement would "somehow come out."

Ermita also said the JMSU would not be grounds for Ms Arroyo's impeachment.

"Right now, the legal opinion is that issued by [Justice] Secretary Raul Gonzalez. [The JMSU involves] pre-exploration activities and [is not a] violation because ... the Constitution says that it is the state that shall undertake exploratory explorations and scientific activities in an area," he said.

Reconsideration

At an emergency meeting on Tuesday Cuenco's committee voted to have HB 3216 "reconsidered" to the committee level.

Cuenco—who filed the bill in one of the previous Congresses—said he wanted it finally passed on third reading, "but I was outvoted."

But the committee decision will still be voted on by the House plenary as the bill is already in its jurisdiction following its sponsorship and passage on second reading on the floor.

At any rate, Senior Deputy Minority Leader Rafiq Gubra, a former national security adviser and naval officer, mentioned on the House floor on Tuesday that he would block the bill's reconsideration.

"I would like to register my very strong objection to any effort to resuscitate House Bill No. 3216 on the ground that this will prejudice our territorial integrity and our claims in the South China Sea," Gubra said.

"What occurred is this ... it would be a sign of weakness in relation to the other countries who have adversarial claims on the same islands," he said.

Scrap of paper

Cuenco said Beijing was "trying to use diplomatic lingo, but they are up set with us."

He said he had no reason to doubt the authenticity of the document as one that was issued by Beijing and the Bureau of its sentiments became a issue from Philippine Ambassador to China Sonia Brady.

But he said the document was not a note verbale. He said that legally and technically speaking, it might even be "a scrap of paper" and it was not even signed.

As a result, Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño said a hastened him that "an assigned scrap of paper would block the passage" of HB 3216.

"It's a good thing that [Cuenco] used the charge d'affaires met him to explain [Beijing's] protest," Casiño said.

As early as last week, Golez and Casiño had questioned the delay in the passage of the bill on third and final reading for the Senate to consider.

After congressional recess

Passage on third reading is widely seen as only a ministerial act on the part of Congress.

According to Speaker Prospero Nograles, the fate of the bill will be known until after the congressional recess, which starts today.

"Whatever we will do on the bill will have to wait until we come back on April 28," he said.

Iligalay Rep. Orlando Fua, a vice chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, said on the floor that the Department of Foreign Affairs had expressed concern that the bill's passage would entail international problems.

Cuenco said that without legislation on Philippine baselines, the country would have no basis to questioning maritime cases in international courts.

JMSU inquiry

Even the House inquiry into the JMSU will have to wait until after the congressional recess, Cuenco said.

He said the committee on rules retained only on Tuesday the authority for his committee to conduct the inquiry, which was to have started today with former Philippine National Oil Co. president Eduardo Ilarlaiz (the Philippine signatory to the JMSU) and Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo among the first resource persons.

"We were not able to comply with the requirement of three days' notice before holding a hearing," Cuenco said.

He also said the other committees tasked by the House plenary to undertake the inquiry appeared "cold" to the idea of looking into the JMSU.

He was referring to the committees on energy (chaired by Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo, the President's eldest son) and on national defense (chaired by Bonguinan Rep. Arthur Celeste).

Cuenco, nonetheless, said his committee could go it alone "if necessary."

At the House, Ermita defended Malacañang's decision to keep the deal under wraps.

"The executive felt there was no need to consult Congress," he said when asked why Malacañang did not consult lawmakers before entering into a deal with other claimants to the Spratlys.

He said that when PNOC entered into the agreement with China Offshore Oil Corp. and Vietnam Oil and Gas Corp., "they knew that they were qualified by an opinion from the DOJ that they can enter into an agreement, so there's no need to consult Congress about it."

Ermita said the agreement was forged precisely to prevent a shooting incident between the claimants in the disputed area in the South China Sea that was believed to be "rich" in mineral, oil and gas reserves and fish stocks.

Senate too

The Senate is also urging Malacañang to come clean on the JMSU.

The people's right to information is again being tested, with access to documents pertaining to the Spratlys deal limited," Senate President Manny Villar said.

He said the records and maps pertaining to the Spratlys deal "should be translated in accurate scientific or not misleading terms to protect the sovereign rights over Kalayaan Islands." With a report from Bill C. Cabacungan Jr.

PROBING THE PADRES Sen. Pia Razon welcomes Communist Party of China's International Department Vice Minister Liu Hongcai. Liu heads a delegation of senior Chinese officials who are here reportedly to investigate allegations of irregularities in a number of contracts between the two countries like the NBN-ZTE deal.

Ben's 'borjer' that ZTE made bestseller 'to-die-for'

From page A1

"BORJERS" TO DIE FOR The NBN-ZTE deal is now wrapped in Ben's Diner as the dining range of the Black Black Golf and Country Club in Muntinlupa City is just taking off. Named after its owner, Benjamin Abalos, one of the deal's key players, the diner stands in the public consciousness when Abalos in a TV encounter with its owners, Jun Lozada, said that the latter continued to eat "borjers" there even after the alleged deals thereof he got from the former.

The P90 hamburger sold at his family-owned Ben's Diner and made famous by the former Commission on Elections chair is the source of denying in relevance in the scandal-tainted NBN contract has reportedly become a bestseller.

Hundreds have since discovered the small after Abalos last month relocated to the "borjer" frequently ordered by NBN when the former Bicolelle Mad Lozada Jr. at the Black Black Golf & Country Club in Muntinlupa City.

Since the report, we had a lot of customers. We also get orders from members who have never ordered it before," said the cook, Cerelina "Mommy Flying" Arroyo.

"Now, sometimes we sell 400 to 600 burgers a day," Arroyo said.

The item known as "Ben's Burger" has actually been on the menu for the last 12 years. Until Abalos' peculiar pronunciation made it to national TV, the then little-known steak sandal only got an average of 50 orders a day, she added.

Girlie Abalos, daughter of the ex-Comelec chair and owner of the diner, said she has also decided to rename Ben's Burger to the catchier "Ben's Borjer."

Talk of the town

The country club "borjer" became the talk of the town and bubble for burger jokes after a televised confrontation between Abalos and Lozada last month.

Abalos then bolted Lozada's claim that he had received death threats from the then Comelec chief in connection with the alleged $130-million commission that Abalos expected to get from the NBN deal with China's ZTE Corp.

Abalos said Lozada committed to go to Black Black and even ordered "borjer" at his daughter's diner after receiving the supposed death threat.

In the instant interview, Girlie said she still had the "sales slips" from 2007 to prove that Lozada and his friends ordered the snack around the time.

Secret recipe

"There was even a day when he ordered twice," she said.

Girlie, who used to own a hamburger shop in Dallas, Texas, before the same back to Manila in 1999, said the "borjer" patty is "100-percent pure beef" and prepared based on a "secret" recipe handed down by the elder Abalos, whom she described as a "born cook."

Cerelina said the hamburger has also spread its cyberspace.

The "borjer" has since figured in at least Abalos video posted on the web by militant groups.

Surely, there must be something in the burger that "you spread," Lozada's lost of Abalos, once facetiously quipped.

Inquiries and requests for a "food review" have also made the rounds, while famous have dubbed it "the borjer to die for" or the "$130-million burger."

Court grills Lozada sis

COURT OF APPEALS JUSTICES AND GOVernment lawyers yesterday grilled the sister of brutalized rival witness Rodolfo Lozada on alleged contradictions in her statements regarding the events involving her brother.

Carmen Lozada was questioned on why she even executed the date on the request for police protection that she said she just signed because of her brother's request, who she believed was under duress.

She had said that before she signed the document, she pointed out that the date of request should have been Feb. 3, the day of Rodolfo's arrival, instead of February 6, which is the same date when she signed the request.

"You said you were reluctant to sign... is it logical for you to correct mistake when you yourself were reluctant?" Justice Regalado Maambong asked.

But Carmen replied that it was "insistence" by her to check documents that she was signing, and added that she should not have signed the request. Lyda E. Salmorovia

Delos Santos, 69

GENARO D. DELOS SANTOS SR. DIED ON Thursday at 69.

He is survived by his wife Yolanda, and children Josefina Theresa (late) Emmanuel Benjamin Arsenio and Antonio; his sisters Jr, Ma. Consuelo and Roberta Robles; and 6 grandchildren.

His remains lie at the Funeraria Paz on Aramaya Avenue in Quezon City. He will be buried tomorrow, March 14, at the Holy Cross Memorial Park in Novaliches, Quezon City.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, March 13, 2008
5th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Gen 17:3-9
Gospel: Jn 8:51-59

Jesus said to the Jews, "Truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never experience death." The Jews replied, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died and the prophets as well. Are you say: 'Whoever keeps my word will never experience death.' Who do you claim to be? Do you claim to be greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets also died."

Then Jesus said, "If I were to praise myself, it would mean for nothing. But he who gives glory to me is the Father, the very one you claim as your God, although you don't know him. I know him. And if I were to say that I don't know him, I would be a liar like you. But I know him and I keep his word. As for Abraham, your ancestor, he looked forward to my day when I would come, and he rejoiced when he saw it."

The Jews then said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?" And Jesus said: "Truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." Then they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and left the Temple.

Commentary

Who is Jesus? There are only three possible answers: either Jesus is trying to deceive others through false claims (and therefore possesses by a demon), or he is deluded ("He is someone who would claim to be Napoleon,) or he is exactly who he claims to be, the Son of God [for to say 'I am' Jesus makes a divine declaration].

The question "Who is Jesus?" says claim to our minds and our hearts. Because our answer affects his identity as God's only begotten Son, our lives must also conform to that answer, requiring short of what puts us on a par with the Apostles who, from rightly confessed:

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It is the place we run to for some peace and quiet, the space to wash away the worries of the day. It is the venue for some of our most interesting reads. The one room we most often we are in it at least.

It is the room that grieves us, relaxes us, comforts us, cleanses us.

It is the one room that takes care of us. HCG believes we must take care of it.

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HCG "I can live here."

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PMA female cadets now allowed to sport longer hair

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

FORT DEL PILAR, BAGUIO City—Only one female cadet will join this year's top graduates of the Philippine Military Academy as valedictorian.

But salutory Cadet First Class Ma.Ann Simon of PMA "Maghinay" (Bagong Maliwa ng Lahi or new breed of leaders) Class of 2008 receives the honor of graduating No. 3, she will be wearing her hair for longer than the female cadets who first graduated in 1997.

Clad in blue up to the newly liberated world of a unisex military.

According to Maj. Gen. Leopoldo Maligalig, PMA superintendent, female cadets are now allowed to wear their hair longer than the usual one inch or shoulder-length for men.

In 2003, Capt. Arlene Orejana-Tallacon, one of the first female graduates, was required to keep her hair from touching her shoulders. But female cadets today can have hair long enough for a ponytail, provided they groom themselves well, Maligalig said.

Reproductive health

Male cadets have also begun familiarizing themselves with reproductive health courses to enlighten them about their female counterparts.

A pep squad of female cadets have joined chest-thrusting competitions.

Maligalig said he had asked a women's group to set an undergone trainer for the female cadets. "These cadets need (to) be (trained) to discuss women's issues, like marriage," he said.

The United States of the Philippines Act of 1902 banned the female cadets because they have performed "much better than their male counterparts," he said. The repeal opportunity law (Republic Act No. 7192) allows the PMA to recruit females.

In the last 11 years, there is male cadets have topped their classes. They are Navy Ensign Arlene de la Cruz of Class 1999, Army 2nd Lt. Tara Velasco of Class 2003 and 2nd Lt. Audrey Medica of Class 2007.

Velasco now teaches at the academy.

Many female cadets have also signed up because of the celebrity status the PMA confers on women in the 21st century.

DOING BETTER THAN THE MALES This is what the PMA Superintendent, Maj. Gen. Leopoldo Maligalig says of the 23 female cadets who will graduate next week with the 228 strong Baghani Class of 2008. One of them, Ma-Ann Simon, ranks 3rd in her class.

Cadet First Class Cherrie Casaberg of Baghani Class of 2008 is the third in her family to graduate from the academy. She said she was 5 when Ompisa, wife of jailed Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, and 17 other women in first joined in 1993. Trillanes is a member of PMA Class 1995.

Her siblings in the military are Brownside of Class 1992, who joined the Philippine Air Force, and Brenda of Class 1993 who joined the Philippine Navy.

No. 3 cum laude

"The female cadets are very well selected," Maligalig said, adding that this accounts for their good performance in the PMA. "We have to congratulate them for just being here. In the PMA, women colleges the song," he said.

Simon, 22, of Bagong Silang in Ligao City Albay, is graduating No. 3, cum laude. She will receive the Secretary of National Defense saber.

PMA alumni seek to abolish 'protector clause'

From page A1

Reuters. It is justify his vote as Gen AFP chief of staff in sitting with the people calling for the ouster of then-President Joseph Estrada in 2001.

Reyes ordered the military to stand behind the Palm forces during the people uprising.

Maligalig said Reyes had told the alumni to revisit the "protector clause" in order to work for its amendment or removal from the Constitution altogether.

The reason the military has retained the Reyes could in a new Edsa uprising is that "we have all learned our lessons," the PMA head said.

He disclosed the alumni's sentiments in a news conference on Wednesday when this year's top PMA graduates were presented to the media. (Story on Page A1.)

The alumni have not resolved to retire only to amend the Constitution although the chapter of the clause has been apparent to them for sometime now, according to Maligalig.

He said some alumni, including those who participated in the Oakwood mutiny in 2003, had cited the "protector clause" in its literal sense.

Reminder from martial rule

But quoting Reyes, Maligalig said: "The intent of this clause in the 1987 Constitution was shortsighted because this arose from the fact that in the 1970s the republic underwent martial rule. That protector clause was made

TOP GUNS The top 10 PMA graduates of 2008 are from left, Cadets First Class Carlo Catalan (rank No. 6); Vay Caballero (No. 10); Marc Louie Parado (No. 8), Yeugel Lacambra (No. 5); Bernard Roderick Joaquin (No. 2), Ma-Ann Simon (No. 3), Arvel Walter (No. 1); Marc Louie Parado (No.8); Francisco Penalosa Jr. (No. 7) and Dennis Legaspi (No. 4).

to weaken the military—as remind the military—not to be the oppressor of the people."

"Some of our graduates have taken this (clause) literally believing they have every right to go to Oakwood, occupy this and change the President. We have chance to defend the (constitution of the future) here in PMA. We have discussed this for eighty-with the cadets," he said.

Cadets continue to celebrate the memorial of the dawn in their love and ethics subjects, and they all understand that "it is not the duty of the man to uniform to interfere in politics," Maligalig said.

Don't tempt us

In fact, according to him, the new PMA thinking to 2015, a 10-year institutional reform plan, already defines the new military official as a leader and a manager, and not as a protector.

The AFP remains one of the few state agencies which are licensed to carry firearms. "When the man in uniform has his finger on the trigger, please don't tempt us because we will always say 'No,'" Maligalig said.

"Our cadets know this by now. Our cadets know that two generations of alumni during Edsa 1 and II, politicians, aggravate, spin elections, always want the PMA cadet corps to have a position on political issues," he said.

"The PMA and the cadet corps are the heart and soul of the AFP. This is where everything begins," he said.

Zambo orphan is PMA 2008 valedictorian; female cadet ranks No. 3

From page A1

of honor and speaker during the graduation rites on Holy Tuesday, March 18.

Bellos will also receive the Philippine Navy Sword for being the No. 1 graduate and will join the Navy, and five other awards.

Joaquin brothers

But leading the every more significance is Cadet First Class Bernard Roderick Joaquin, of Aguilar, Pangasinan, who will graduate as valedictorian.

Joaquin, 22, is the brother of Army 2nd Lt. Bolly Joaquin, the valedictorian of PMA "Maliyah" Class of 2004, who was ranked from the US Army Infantry School at Fort Benning in Georgia four years ago after he was caught shoplifting a $12-movie compact disc.

Bolly's officer training in Georgia was part of the John United States Military Agreement (Jusmag). Around he received in 2004 for being the top Army recruit.

Bernard, who is graduating magna cum laude, will also receive the Jusmag Award for joining the Philippine Air Force and is expected to attend the Top Air Force Academy in the United States after graduation.

He said he disliked his brother despite the setback. He refused to describe his award as redemption for his brother, who has returned after a tour in Aibi, Iraki.

Bernard said that his brother remained in active service because his case was still under appeal.

Mindanaoans at the top

The other cadets from Mindanao who are graduating among the topnotchers are the following:

- Cadets First Class Dennis Legaspi, 24, of Iyol, Dumbungan Sibuguy, South;
- Yeugel Lacambra, 24, of Pagadian City, Sibu;
- Francisco Penalosa Jr., 21, of Sinsuat Maguindanao Zamboanga del Sur, seventh.
- Dennis Moreno, 23, of Bangar, South Cotabato, ninth.
- Vay Caballero, 21, of Cagayan de Oro City, 10th.

Cadet First Class Carlo Catalan, 22, of Lower Bantigued, Davao Oriental, ranked sixth while Cadet First Class Marc Louie Parado, 21, of Bulilog, Bohol, ranked eighth.

Bicolano is No. 3

Of the 23 female cadets in the graduating class, Cadet First Class Ma-Ann Simon, 22, of Ligao City, Albay, landed No. 3.

She is graduating cum laude and will receive the Secretary of National Defense Saber and the Air Force professional course plaques.

At 25, Bellos is one of the oldest in the Regiment Class. He finished a physics course at Western Mindanao University before he took a year before applying for the PMA at 21.

His father, Feliciano, died when he was in second year high school and his mother, Inty, died in 2004.

Legaspi and Lacambra are both children of soldiers.

Legaspi, who will graduate magna cum laude, took up civil engineering at Mindanao State University before entering the PMA.

Marcos opened account in 1972

THE CONTESTED $353-MILLION Swiss asset of the Marcoses was first deposited by the late President Ferdinand Marcos in an account with Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Inc. in New York in 1972.

At the time, it was estimated to be $2 million. When the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) discovered the seven accounts in 2000, it had already grown to $35 million.

Arelma Inc. is a Panamanian corporation believed to have been used as a dummy by the Marcos family for a Swiss bank account. Merrill Lynch Inc. is a New York-based brokerage company.

In July 2000, the PCGG asked Merrill Lynch to turn over the Arelma assets to the Philippine government, proposing that they be placed in escrow with the Philippine National Bank while the antigraft court handling them had yet to rule on whether the assets belonged to the government or to the Marcos estate.

Other claimants

The proposal was rejected by Merrill Lynch, citing the existence of other claimants.

The money in the account was also being claimed by at least 9,000 victims of human rights abuse during the martial law regime of Marcos.

In 2006, Hawaii District Judge Manuel Real ordered the Philippine government to give the money to the account to the human rights claimants.

Asserting sovereign immunity, the Philippine government said the case could not proceed in US courts.

US Supreme Court

In December last year, the US Supreme Court rejected the Aquino government's appeal from the dispute, following appeals from the Philippine government.

The willingness of lower US courts to consolidate get involved "since significant concerns," the US Solicitor General said in a filing in the Supreme Court. The Solicitor General represents the US government in cases in the Supreme Court.

The ruling by the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco, which threw out a Philippine motion for review in 2006, prejudice cases in the Philippines on the same issue, the US Solicitor General said. *Kurt Desmarais, Inquirer Research*

Marcos victims upbeat on US ...

From page A1

Marcos in 1972 as a brokerage in New York. Merrill Lynch went in court in 2000 to determine the money's owner. (See In the Know on this page.)

The Philippine government asserted sovereign immunity and said the case could not proceed in US courts.

Not a cent of $2-B judgment

The 9,539 people claiming gross human rights abuses, obtained a $2-billion judgment against the Marcos estate in a US court in 1995 but have yet to receive money because of multiple appeals filed by the Philippine government.

"We are confident in the strength of our arguments," Robert Swift, lead lawyer for the human rights victims, said in a statement. "Just as we prevailed in the two lower courts, we hope to prevail (here."

Swift said it was disappointing the US government's intervened through the Office of the US Solicitor General to have the case reviewed.

"All the American government wants is to assist a friendly but corrupt regime," Swift said, adding that the decision "ignored the significance of the case to ordinary Filipinos who want to see justice done for the victims."

Marcos and his family have been accused of stealing between $5 billion and $10 billion from the country's coffers.

A People Power revolt ousted Marcos in February 1986, forcing him and his family to flee to Hawaii, where he died in exile in 1989.

Rod Domingo Jr., the human rights victims' Filipino lawyer, said the government "spends hundreds of thousands of pesos to defeat their claims" for money "that could have been spent feeding the poor of this nation."

Domingo said the funds being disputed were part of the "Petition account" of a Panamanian dummy company.

The amount being claimed by the human rights victims is the case amounted to $35 million which, including interest, would now be worth close to $40 million, the lawyer said.

But the money is no longer being contested by the Marcos family but is being fought over by the human rights victims and the Presidential Commission on Good Governance (PCGG), which represents the Philippine government.

"The PCGG wants the funds forfeited in favor of the government," Domingo said.

"We have won on the lower levels already, including on the equivalents of our regional trial court and the Court of Appeals," Domingo said.

He noted that the Philippine government did not even bother to present its evidence when the case was being heard by the appellate courts. *Reports from AP and Ronlin Lucio*

Corruption may erode Asia's edge

SINGAPORE—CORRUPTION MAY erode the economic competitiveness of Asian countries like China, India and Vietnam, by wiping away their low-cost advantage, according to a report released on Wednesday.

The annual report by Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC) surveyed the views of 1,400 expatriates who were asked to grade corruption in Asia and the extent it would affect a country's business environment.

The Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and China were graded the most corrupt countries in Asia, while Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan were viewed as the least corrupt in the region.

RP rates 9.0 on scale of 10

PERC said that the rate of outsourcing standards and that high levels of corruption were eroding the low-cost advantages of the fast-growing economies of India, China and Vietnam.

"Corruption is yet another cost," PERC said in the report. "If governments do not reduce it or an issue, the competitiveness of their economies ... will be eroded that much faster."

On a scale of 10, with zero being the least corrupt and 10 being the most corrupt, the Philippines rated 9.0, China was 7.98, Vietnam got 7.75 and India was 7.25. Singapore was rated 1.33 in the survey, done between January and February this year.

China's state-owned firms

The "most serious" corruption problem in China did not involve foreign investors but state-owned companies and those with access to state assets, PERC said.

"One estimate ... put on conservative... is that 10 percent of land transactions, investment and government spending are stolen or misappropriated," the report said.

For Vietnam, the main problem facing investors was not under-the-table bribes but rather "legislative gaps" that exposed investors to punishment for activities that would be commonplace in the international arena.

In India, corruption and bureaucracy are difficult to tell apart, the report said, adding that the "biggest problem" of corruption happens at the local government level.

Can't walk away

However, the rapid economic growth of some Asian economies have trumped many firms' concerns over corruption.

"Most companies cannot just walk away from a very lucrative business environment because they might have to deal with local corruption," the report said.

Public sector vigilance

But Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan, the report credited weak government action and private sector vigilance for perceived success in fighting corruption.

"People had to be taught to stand up for their own rights and neighborhood chat they were not helpless victims in a flawed but unchangeable system," the report said of Hong Kong's success. Reuters

TRUTH TO TELL As the Senate's 12th public hearing of the NBN-ZTE deal on Tuesday nears, Socio Mod'ings (left) and Lou San Miguel answer the hard-hitting questions of Sen. Pueblo Lacson (back to camera). AUTHOR/SOURCE

GMA elated but Lacson ...

Front page A1

Reelin dared Lacson to take the hot seat himself and revived what Sen Miguel had told Lacson during their meetings before Lacson took Sen Miguel to the Senate hearing. Said Reelin: "If I were him, I'd take the witness stand and reveal and disclose what they called about."

Lacson said he found Reelin's challenge "threatening" and accused Reelin of "practically dictating to him."

"I will respect him as a person, but I'd like to caution him that professor has to listen," Lacson said. He warned that he had a lot to say about Reelin if he wanted to get back at him.

'Common friend'

A day after the hearing, Lacson was still steaming from the royal rebuff he got from San Miguel. He is now talking of bringing out a "common friend" to get his reluctant "surprise witness" to talk.

For 12 hours on Tuesday, San Miguel fought off attempts to confirm claims that ZTE gave bribes of up to $41 million to the so-called "Greedy Group plus plus" to get the NBN contract.

To exasperation, Lacson scolded San Miguel for "lying all day long" and accused him of having engaged in bribery in the deal to hook up electronically by an internet broadband the Philippine bureaucracy.

Lacson said he had four meetings with San Miguel prior to his Senate testimony. However, he said his conversations with San Miguel were not taped. The only sources to the meetings were a common friend whom Lacson did not identify but considered bringing to the Senate some time later.

Who's common friend?

Lacson said it was not retired Philippine National Police Director Quintin de la Torre who, an earlier witness, Dante Madrinan, said was a member of the "Greedy Group plus plus" that he claimed also included Mr Socio and Lou San Miguel, former Election Commission Chair Benjamin Abalos and businessman Dolfen Reyes.

San Miguel has known Lacson since the senator was still in the PNP himself. Lacson was a former PNP chief. San Miguel had helped the PNP acquire an Internet service, which De la Torre had once operated. San Miguel later hired De la Torre, a computer expert.

Lacson said that at the proper time, he would ask the common friend to divulge what San Miguel had told him about the NBN deal, which was substantially more than he let on in his Senate appearance.

Cautious as the media buzzed in his favor, Lacson said San Miguel insisted he was not aware of the alleged bribes or kickback given to the Ofel Couple and Abalos.

San Miguel merely confirmed that he was granted .3 percent success fee of the $329-million contract to ZTE consultant Abet being facilitated by Sen. Gloria Macapagal as a client firm, San Miguel had drawn his credentials: his company was the first to introduce the cable Internet which was the country's first broadband.

Mixed assessment

Sen. Loren Legarda said that while she did not see any reason to doubt San Miguel, she noted that he had held back some information because he felt that this was speculation and not his personal knowledge.

Sen. Richard Gordon said that San Miguel's testimony bolstered the need for the Senate to compel witnesses to make a full deposition before appearing in a hearing.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said that while some called San Miguel's testimony a dud, "it was a good and productive public hearing overall and his testimony moved forward the investigation." He said San Miguel confirmed many events, the participation of certain personalities, and gave "a complete picture of how the NBN deal was put together."

Cayetano said the committee on accountability of public officials and investigations would resume its NBN probe either on the last week of March or first week of April.

Who believes Malacañang?

Sen. Francis Pangilinan said that it appeared that it was only Malacañang who believed San Miguel's testimony. But "who believes Malacañang on the issue of ZTE-NBN deal?" he asked.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said that San Miguel was obviously holding back a lot of things that he had previously told Lacson.

"Clearly he's protecting the interests of San Miguel," a very brushed about that a witness would tell us how the money was transferred from ZTE to the so-called 'Gang of Four' and how the money got branded to some other people in high positions in government," Pimentel said.

"It was obvious he spilled the beans yesterday to counter Lacson but would not speak publicly, which is unfortunate," he said. With a report from Norman Bordadora

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PHILIPS

Rains, floods continue to batter Eastern Samar

From page 8

"What made the situation worse was the kind of wood brought by the flood. It was black, and it covered the river bays of good soil. It is safe to say that 30 percent of all the rice land has been damaged," Solidon told the bayanan.

Dolores' experience was far from unique.

Other municipalities are overflows of towns and streets that had turned muddy due to mud and silt.

Damage report

According to the Eastern Samar report submitted last month to the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council, the floods caused P48 million in damage to the provincial irrigation system in 14 locations; Ps 3 million to high-value crops such as bananas and vegetables; P12.1 million in livestock and poultry; P4 million to fisheries; P59.5 million to rice lands; and P1.86 million in highways, farm-to-market roads and bridges.

The death toll reached 11, and as many as 32,000 families in 338 barangays were displaced.

Among the damaged bridges was the one in Maydolong, a mere 60 kilometers south of the capital city of Borongan. As a result, one of the two highways systems connecting Eastern Samar to other provinces on the island was cut off.

And the rains have not stopped, although their intensity has eased.

28 hours

On March 3, the downpour was sufficient to retard movement from Tacloban City for as long as 28 hours to Maslana, a barangay of Taft.

The hapless was witness to how the rains rendered the national highway which connects Eastern Samar to Samar and Leyte, impassable even by passenger buses or delivery trucks.

The river that runs through Maslana overflowed its banks, and the flood would not subside because of the unfortunate confirmation of high tide, the heavy rains that lasted the whole day and night, and the mud and rocks that rushed down the mountains of Taft.

Augusto Bahinda, a resident of the next town of Taft, arrived in Maslana at 7 p.m. on Sunday and was able to get his motorcycle CBR across only at 3 p.m. the next day.

"It's the first time this happened to me in my 65 years," said Bahinda, who, like the most dear, 300 other stranded motorists, had to spend the night huddled in his vehicle.

Overwhelming fishermen clogged their houses to the highway and charged each desperate passenger P50 to get across.

Those who could not wait for the flood to subside abandoned their buses as first light, plodded down the highway and made the rest of the journey in barotac.

They then walked 17 kilometers, wading through severe flooded portions along the way to downtown Taft, where they could finally take a jeepney to Borongan.

Illegal logging

Provincial Board Member Cirilo E. Balagapo Jr., who was among those marooned in Maslana that Sunday, had to attend a committee meeting in Borongan the next day.

Early in the morning, he turned back and took the south coastal road via Basey in Samar and then crossed Eastern Samar through the town of Arteaga—a journey that took another seven hours.

Balagapo, 53, told the bayanan that he had never experienced being stranded that long.

Asked what could have caused the flooding, he cited the long days of rain and the adverse effects of illegal logging and mining in the province.

"It's very basic. If too much sediment accumulates in the rivers and seas, they can no longer hold that much water, so they overflow," said Balagapo, a former regional director of the Department of Agriculture.

"And if there is rampant logging in the forests, there are no more trees to hold the rain water, so it rampages down the mountain," he said.

Are we listening?

The bishops of Sto., Borongan, Calbayog, Catarman and Naval expressed a similar opinion in a Feb. 24 pastoral letter titled "Mother Nature is Speaking, Are We Listening?"

"From what we see, it is obvious a decade that these floods have been exacerbated by many of our depleted forests, damaged mountains and mangrove landscapes due to irresponsible logging and mining. At times, it seems everything we have lost is beyond recovery," said the letter read in the five dioceses.

In an interview, Bishop Crispin B. Vargas of the Borongan diocese said that while global warming was upon us—which, he pointed out, explained the long days of rain—the major role played by logging and mining in the floods could not be denied.

"I underscored that logging and mining can be traced back to the 1960s. The forests have been partially denuded. We are now paying for that because the environment cannot cope anymore with the long days of rain," Vargas said.

Balagapo said that at the meeting on Monday of Eastern Samar's committee on mining, local government officials agreed to three main moral: now mining and logging activities were affecting the province.

He noted that there were pending applications for exploration permits in the province, which is said to be rich in nickel and copper resources.

Rains to blame

But Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone put the blame for the flooding squarely on the torrential rains.

Citing experts, he said typhoons were tended to veer away from the province because of its forest cover.

Evardone denied that there were mining operations in Eastern Samar, and said a provincial ordinance was passed as early as 2000 declaring a moratorium on large-scale mining and logging.

"I really don't know about mining and logging when there are no ongoing operations, not for a long time," he said.

But Evardone conceded that there could be some long-abandoned mining operations under joint of Samar that were still adversely affecting the province.

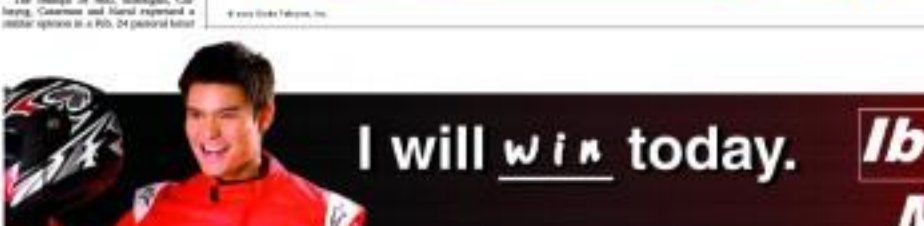
Set back

Meanwhile, the rain is shining again on Eastern Samar, allowing it to slowly get back on its feet. The rehabilitation of damaged farm land and infrastructure is now the priority.

But unless the root cause of the problem is determined and something is done about it, the residents of this poor province will just have to brace themselves for more damaging floods when the rains inevitably return.

LIFE IN THE ISLANDS Stranded residents pay boatmen P10 each (US$0.24) to ferry across the flooded portions of the national highway in Barangay Maslana, Taft, Eastern Samar. ANTONIO TAMAYO JONAIT

BETTER THAN FISHING A fisherman earns an hour P100 a day ferrying passengers across the waist-high waters of the national highway in Taft, Eastern Samar.



Puno says Internet new battlefield for citizens fighting to protect privacy

By Jocelyn R. Uy

CHIEF JUSTICE REYNATO PUNO (left, center) justified the adoption by the Supreme Court of the writ of habeas data last month, saying that the courts are not hard-pressed a new battlefield for citizens fighting to protect their right to privacy.

Speaking at a forum hosted by the International Hospital Lawyers in Quezon City, Puno stressed that computer technology continued to erode personal privacy and diminished a person's ability to control the flow of information.

"There is, therefore, a pressing need to provide for judicial remedies that would allow the summary hearing of the unlawful use of data ... and to remedy violations of the right to privacy," he said.

Puno pointed out that the advent of the Internet had provided "a new field of battle" in the fight to privacy, saying that it may deprive individuals of the right to control the flow of information about themselves.

Above, misuse

He cited biometric technologies, which had been gaining popularity in the Philippines since 2006.

Private companies, banks and government agencies have installed finger scan and iris-scan technologies to manage payroll, dispense bonds, conduct surveillance, control security access and reduce fraudulent time card punching, among others, Puno said.

He also noted that the proposed national ID system had the same concept. "As with all technologies, this may be prone to abuse and misuse," he said.

While other countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, have issued their own privacy protection laws 10 years ago, the Philippines has no statutory law on data protection, Presidential Decree No. 1718.

Puno said that the writ of habeas data is now promulgated to protect the right to informational privacy. "It finds its justification on the right of privacy," he said.

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In The Know

The right to habeas data (Latin for "you should have the data") upholds the right of persons to access promptly information about themselves or their properties.

In issuing the writ, a court compels public organizations to release information about certain persons.

A petition may also be a petition for the writ of habeas data to request the modification and even the destruction of records about him, if the original files are inaccurate.

The writ of habeas data is used in several Latin American countries like Brazil, Paraguay, Peru and Argentina, Cyrus L. Bunsoberon, Aquarius Research

COURT OF LAST RESORT Chief Justice Reynato Puno is the main speaker during a forum on "Preserving Human Rights: The Writ of Habeas Data" on Wednesday (PHOTO BY ...)

Supreme court issues ...

Primitivo M.

Luz asked the tribunal to compel police and military officials to disclose and show dreamy information gathered about him in connection with an alleged plot to assassinate President Macapagal-Arroyo. The case stemmed from the Peninsula Manila standoff on Nov. 29 last year.

Sanz, a veteran in the killing of two soldiers, sought the removal of his name from the military's order of battle, or list of enemies of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Sanz also asked for the scrapping of papers that he said the military had forced him to sign.

Respondents

Among the respondents in the Luz and Sanz petitions were AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. and Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon.

A writ of habeas data is a judicial remedy that could be used by any party to compel the release of information, or to update, rectify, suppress or destroy data. It could be invoked by those whose right to privacy in life, liberty and security is violated or threatened.

The writ of habeas data is expected to complement the writ of habeas corpus and the relatively new writ of amparo adopted by the Supreme Court in the midst of an upsurge in disappearances and extrajudicial executions under the Arroyo administration.

In his petition, Luz asked that Esperon and other military officials be made to appear in court to confirm or deny that they had ordered Luz under surveillance in the investigation of the Peninsula takeover by rebel soldiers led by Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, a former navy lieutenant who was also involved in the 2003 Oakwood mutiny.

Right to be left alone

Luz said government officials should be asked to admit and reveal to the court any photograph, report, data or information gathered in the course of the "case building" against him.

Luz said he intended to prove during the hearing that there was no basis at all to place him under surveillance, and asked that the government officials be directed to respect his "right to be left alone."

The lack of response on his denials of involvement in the Peninsula incident and his unanswered letter of inquiry, Luz said, were "inconsistent with the basic rules of fair play, of moral and an unjustified incursion on (his) right to security and privacy."

Sanz said a military intelligence operative, in August, Omarul Mendoz, told him of his inclusion in the AFP order of battle.

Asked to recant affidavit

He also said military officials had asked him to recant his affidavit in the case of the 2003 killings of activists Eden Marcellana and Eddie Gumanoy. He said he was also asked to state that retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan and his men were not involved in the incident.

Sanz said he was asked as well to sign a document declaring him to be a rebel who had surrendered and that he had organized communists as influence rebel groups.

Also yesterday, the Supreme Court issued a writ of amparo directing the appellate court to hear the petition of publisher Nilo Barcelo, who said he had received threats and had been harassed because of his reports on illegal gambling, child trafficking and fraud.

Among the respondents in Barcelo's petition were Cabanatuan City Mayor Perfecto Estacio, Vice Mayor Rafael Inlayawan and Councilors Allan Mathieu, Teddy Flores and Roberto Concepcion.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Vol. 23 No. 97

OPINION

Most corrupt

FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW, a controversial annual survey by Hong Kong–based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy has found the Philippines to be the most corrupt in Asia. Sort of.

It is important to keep the limits of the survey in mind. First, it does not include all countries in Asia. It does not, for instance, include some of the most corrupt economies in the region, such as Burma (Myanmar) and North Korea. Thus, it is best to qualify the survey finding in the following sense: The Philippines has the worst corruption among Asia's 13 biggest economies.

EDITORIAL

The survey is also a poll of polls: It is made up of the results of 13 different surveys, one for each economy. Only those expatriate businessmen who do business in the Philippines, for example, were asked for their perception of corruption in the Philippines. There is no region-wide survey, and thus no region-wide finding.

Not least, and as PERC itself notes, corruption is the subject of greater media coverage in the Philippines than in authoritarian countries like China and Vietnam. In other words, and as anti-corruption champion Tony Kwok of Hong Kong has pointed out for years, greater publicity about corruption in governments leads naturally to public perception of greater corruption in governments.

And yet, despite all these necessary qualifiers, the stark reality confronts us. Seven years after the people powered scores of a plundering president, corruption in the country has grown worse.

It is not only the PERC survey that reminds us; other surveys, such as those by Pulse Asia and an internal poll conducted by the influential Makati Business Club, reveal the unprecedented extent of the corruption. Indeed, the controversial Pulse Asia poll conducted last October, in the immediate aftermath of Pampanga Gov. Ed Panlilio's disclosure about the distribution of cash gifts right in Malacañang, showed that a plurality of voting-age Filipinos found President Macapagal-Arroyo to be the most corrupt of the country's last five presidents.

The civic value of the roiling controversy over the allegedly overpriced National Broadband Network is that a threshold has been crossed. A people grown complacent over corruption allegations has rediscovered its sense of outrage. Even the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has recognized that the entire country now faces what it called a "crisis of truth." This crisis is rooted, dramatically, in allegations of spectacular corruption.

We hope that, in recovering its sense of outrage, the public will rediscover—or learn to no longer ignore—the causal connection between corruption and poverty.

Last week, the National Statistical Coordination Board released sobering statistical data: Poverty has claimed some 780,000 more families (well over 3 million people) in the three years between 2003 and 2006. It is racist coincidence that some of the corruption scandals that Arroyo administration has to answer for occurred, or emerged, during the exact same period?

Corruption leads to more poverty because money for development projects is diverted, because it keeps the disadvantaged in a continuing state of dependency and (not least) because it leads to more corruption. It is a self-perpetuating vicious cycle.

Unfortunately, over the years, the public has learned to accept a minimum level of corruption—not only in the "wrong" and "bigger" that mirrors much of our daily existence, but also in segments (public officials hiring an unconscionable number of relatives as "confidential" assistants), in ghost projects or payrolls, in over-pricing. Even more unfortunately, over the years that minimum level has risen; today we face the possibility that a billion-peso project like the MRT could have been over-priced by as much as half.

The Asian Development Bank's latest diagnostic report cites five "constraints" holding back the country's progress and anti-poverty agenda. To be sure, the report belabors the obvious: we know all this all too well. But the reminders come at the right time. In particular, the report suggests that the country is losing the fight against corruption, thus dampening investor confidence.

To turn the tide in this crucial fight, there is no substitute for putting more crooks in jail.

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Crashing into Taj Mahal

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

(*Three suspected al-Qaida agents, planting to bomb embassies, were nabbed here this week, police say. But India proves daily that this Muslim, as terrorist, is a stereotype. Below is an abridged note, this from New Delhi, e-mailed by a friend. The author requested that his name be deleted.*)

AFTER BOOMTOWN, THE SECOND LARGEST Muslim country in the world is our South Asian neighbor, It is India. The country has 138 million Muslims.

But there are no Indian Muslims in al-Qaeda. None fight alongside Iraqi jihadists. They're a minority in a Hindu-dominated land. Why don't they join it to fly airplanes into Taj Mahal?

They have grievances. Intermittent violence in India had disastrous results. Some American Muslims found their way to al-Qaida. It sat happy with Indian Muslims. But this is not the issue. Why?

The answer is *samosa*. India's *secular, democratic and democratic context* is influenced by a tradition of nonviolence and Hindu toleration.

M. L. Akbar is a Muslim. He is the "Indian Age," an Indian English-language tabloid daily. "Age" readers are mostly non-Muslims. "Outlook" is the only large Muslim community to enjoy sustained democracy for the last 58 years!" he asks. Answer: India's Muslims.

There are reasons, like the 1992 destruction of Ayodhya mosque by Hindu nationalists. But India's Constitution is secular. It provides opportunity for economic self-start to every community that offers talent. A Muslim middle class is growing. It doesn't manifest the deep anger of many non-democratic Muslim states.

Where Islam is embedded in authoritarian societies, it tends to become a vehicle of angry protest, as in Egypt or Syria. But where Islam is [illegible] in a pluralistic democratic society, (like) Turkey or India, progressives get a hearing in a democratic forum. They fight for ideas on a more equal footing.

In November 2001, Istanbul's two main synagogues were hit by suicide bombers. When it reopened, the chief rabbi appeared with the top Muslim there while remarkable numerical consensus on both. The prime minister, who comes from an Islamic party, visited the dead rabbi's kin the first time ever.

"We cannot understand why this child did this thing for bad deeds," the outside bomber's father told the Turkish newspaper Zaman. "Let me meet with the chief rabbi of our Jewish brothers ... and apologize in the name of me and other unconfidentes..."

Different context, different narrative, different imagination.

Despite its imperfections, including the appointment-caste system, India sustains a functioning democracy for over 1 billion people who speak different tongues. That's a great source of stability.

A Muslim woman sits on India's Supreme Court. Just like Muslim women may drive cars in Saudi Arabia. Indian Muslims, including women, have been state governors. High on the Forbes list of global billionaires is an Indian Muslim. Azim Premji, chairman of Wipro, one of the country's major technology firms.

Shortly after the 2001 US conflict in Afghanistan, Indian TV aired a debate between the imam of New Delhi's biggest mosque and parliamentarian Shabana Azmi. Muslim women. Join the jihad, the imam urged. Join the Taliban. Stay covered. Say home is a Muslim shrine, Azmi thundered. She lived in a context that empowered her to speak her mind even to a cloaking cleric.

Give young people a context where they can **pursue an entrepreneurial idea, become** sponsored and efficient, see money their backpockets; have a chance to be educated in a society of hope, publish ideas in a newspaper or run for office. And guess what? People don't want to blow up the world. They want to be part of it.

A South Asian friend recalls his Muslim home in split in 1948. Half went to Pakistan and the other half stayed in Mumbai. Years later, he asked his father: "Why did the Indian half of your family do better than the Pakistani half?"

"You, when a Muslim in India wants a mass living in a big mansion high on cliff, he says: 'One day I will be that man.' In Pakistan, he'll say: 'One day I will kill that man.'"

When you have a pathway to be the best or the Woman, you focus on the path of achieving the best. When you have no pathway, you focus on your worst.

India, 20 years ago, was known as a country of snake charmers, poor people, and Mother Teresa. Today, its image has been re-calibrated. Now, it's seen as a country of brainy people and computer wizards.

Ajit Tudidimbe, CEO of the consulting firm NeoIT, often appears in media to defend outsourcing. When his IIP printer went kaput, he called for tech support. The guy at the other end answered and took all information down. Name his name, it was time for non-nonsense in India. Their thread).

Towards the end, the technician said: "Sir, I was very proud to hear you on [TV] .... You did a good job." And had discussed the backlash against globalization and outsourcing with a sympathetic ear.

"Reinvention. In the fast world you don't get just your humiliation dished out to you [from capitally." And recalled, "You also get your pride dished out to you [here optimally. A help line answer knows, in real time, how a computer engineering his country's half a world away. And it makes him feel proud about himself."

The French and American Revolutions, both anti-democracy and even w-they are all based on social contracts. Their dominant themes in anthority come from the bottom up. And people can be empowered to improve their lot. Those who have a stake in the economy focus on what to do next, not on whom to blame next.

(E-mail: jmercado@mail.com)

Truth versus Lie

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THERE'S SOMETHING FASCINATING ABOUT the term Good versus Evil has taken in our secular history. Good vs. Evil is of course the quintessential theme or storyline that has tugged at the heart of Jews for la Cruz and pushed him to transcend apathy and inaction and act heroically. That is the theme or storyline of lots of local movies, from action to melodrama, and that is the theme or storyline of the late-vox exercises of Angelo Reyes and the impending one.

During Reasons' time, Jose Concepcion caught it par with the aphorism, "It is better to fight a battle than enter the darkness." That line gave a ban to the battle between Good and Evil, one between Light and Dark, and it prepared a way to supplier the dawn. Of course his aphorism got battered to death, it ruined into a trite platitude. Only a few people of my age, when this country seemed to have lost its capacity for outrage (Ursula Rosal forever), **was preparing the opposite** lesson to name the darkness than fight a battle. You don't name the darkness, you'll be fighting candles in lieu of getting electricity.

There was no equivalent aphorism during Estrada time, but the impeachment trial supplied an overwhelm-caption to the crisis, or so tacked a sublimated label to it. Only so, sensitive folks. The English, "here vs. villain" doesn't quite capture it. The kids vs. everybody brings to mind the cult romances of Estrada's time movies, where he was the flawed but good-hearted kids fighting, physically and morally, with fat and gay, the black-hearted masters, mind behind the Mga Alyansang Agos.

The impeachment trial reversed the order, with all the visuals you might find in one of his movies. The kids took the form of the underdog representatives-turned-trial lawyers, whose glowing ideals showed through their legal routines, the chief hero being, yes, John Arenas. And the contrivables took on the form of the three-piece-suited de-composed lawyers (the almost stereotypical look of the last gasp in Imp and FR) mostly, headed by Sedfrey Ordoñez. There was as well the subplot of Chavit Singson vs. Erap to drive home the point—herein buddies turned mortal enemies, **such as you find again in the Erap (and FPJ) movies**, childhood friends one turning into a rogue cop and the other into a tougher who champions the neighborhood.

Today Good vs. Evil has taken the form of Truth vs. Lie.

Again, that has not been expressed in any aphorism, but it is the subtext of its boldface in all the endless "**tell the truth**," "**nonviolent the truth**," "stand by the truth." The concept had been hovering around for some time, the one hallmark of the current government being its inability to tell the truth—it learned on the theory of lie to all the officials. Just until Jun Lozada came along, it never really took off. Lozada proved to be the Tom Cruise to Jack Nicholson spewing the famous line: "The truth? You can't handle the truth!"

The two previous occasions were of course the ingénues of Ilas, but Truth vs. Lie did not fit them to a "T" the way it does the current one. The lies in Marcos' time were a little subtler and were to be found in legalese. Marcos being careful to supplement repression with legal veneer. The lies during Erap's time were just as subtle, having to do with myths making or the tension between libation and virility that you found between movies and real life. The truly rich epithet for Erap at the time was "acting president." You did not quite know where the movies ended and real life began.

It's the current regime that lives up completely to the billing of Truth vs. Lie. There is not just because the official lies are breathtakingly brazen—though that is remarkable enough in itself—but because they are seeping into the public consciousness and corresponding resistance. The most startling instance of it being the cheering in the morning cinema. Until the GI authorities ended it, not admit any of the names in the hoots for but took the Bataan names, Filipinos found previous title that was saying with "Rizal" it. Here was first proof that enough of lying and cheating about was being installed before. Truly, you lead by example. You have crooked leaders, you'll have crooked followers.

Ironically, it was government itself that launched the Truth vs. Lie theme in a big way—by kidnapping Lozada. I suspect that if Lozada had been allowed to go straight to the Senate to say his piece, notwithstanding that he prepared to tell the truth, he would not have made the impact he did. The fifth dead to the story is going over from by middle-class viewers. Certainly, it is not on by the mass. For a brazen attempt to liquidate a witness is, expressing the truth makes it blast forth in all its glory when it finally comes out. After Lozada survived his ordeal, he could say anything or else Senators and he would be believed.

Each time I see sights like that bunch of hicks surrounding Ronnie Ilive in brunch him to tell the truth, I'm elated. Not's security time most of course quick to condemn the action, dismissing as losers who were the kicks should be used to push an agenda. But better an agenda that has on its side the truth than one that has to do with lies, or with self-imposed silence in the face of perfidy, which is brother to lie. Jesse Lapus is wrong to imagine that if you prevent Lozada from going to the computer to campaign for the idea that you too can do it here by simply telling the truth, you are insulting the kids from politics. If last, not allowing Lozada to do so is opening up the kids to the horrible lesson, one constantly imparted to them by their leaders, and one that burns into their brains like a hypnotic suggestion wherever they go, that lying is the most winning asset, crimes pays.

Truth vs. Lie: That is the Sum Good vs. Evil has taken today, and at long last, Truth is winning out.

The real crisis

LAST TUESDAY SENATE MAJORITY LEADER JUAN PONCE ENRILE, THE 12TH on the 23TC/SRO latest issued over 33 hours during the entire allegations and counter-accusations flew between some two "corruption" cartoons. Can has Miguel and three earlier witnesses, namely his former employees Rustom Sandiego, Rodolfo Acosta and Jody Jo Ameria III. But beyond the exchange very little substance came as a result of last Tuesday's hearing, examples, including Senators Edgardo Angara, Joker Arroyo and Juan Ponce Enrile, failed to take to send questions hearings, so that the Senate could attend to more pressing matters like the ratification of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement, the need to define once and for all the Philippines' territorial boundaries before the May 2008 deadline set by the United Nations, and food security.

* * *

The Senate hearings have lost all sense of reason and have turned extremely ugly: the senator people who stand to benefit from them are, more with propositions of vice presidential candidates. There are too, the senators who are against President Macapagal-Arroyo have long considered her and nothing can be said that can every shut them up. Another reason is that, as Senator Francis Pangilinan noted yesterday, at this point GMA is already aware from ousters. Her critics will just have pity and hear that fact and ensure that electoral reforms are put in place to prevent so that we can have credible elections in 2010.

* * *

Last Tuesday was a revelation. If looks could kill, then boy, Enrile's secret service, starting in the morning, would have had to arrest Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago for "threatening" Senator Juan Ponce Enrile. The Enrile people got involved in between last Monday evening, when Lacson has turn with him, and Tuesday's hearing? This question is everyone's mind. But if the Palace did, Sen Miguel did the revelations so expertly, no opposition senator could raise him counter his testimony. Some senators abandoned parliamentary behavior and were frightfully brutal and abusive, especially Senator Alan Peter Cayetano (who is a friend Jamby Madrigal, but he had the patience of job and looked totally embarrassed and conflicted. Le

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

* * *

My husband and I interviewed ex-DFA Sec Ruben last week for the memorial symposium presided by UP's first female president, Dr. Emerlinda Roman, and the UP College of Agriculture's first woman dean, Dr. Candida B. Adalim. My media partner, MCGA Executive Director Cecilia Catalino Alvarez was one of four women in media and the arts, who were honored with *pamaskin* Indyado named after them. The others were the late Betty Go Belmonte, Bonnie Serrevalles of Saro and Che (the Lucero of ABS-CBN's drama.) Cecile's friends teased her that the town subtitle thing to name after her would be a typhoon or tornado. As any case, the hilarious ajustes bred the UP Women of Pure Breeding to our colleagues' humor were all on levels.

While in Los Baños, Cecile and I caught on Dr. William Padolina, deputy executive director of the International Rice Research Institute and former chairman of the National Food Authority, on the rice situation. Earlier, I read that Alfredo Jr., Padolina, who remains GMA's economic adviser, had said the real crisis is not the 25% or higher inflation but the rice crisis. Padolina confirmed that the rice situation, not just in RP but around the world, should be seriously addressed by the people reason than rice, like oil, is a political commodity. Padolina's insights in this area can be summarized in another hearings while a real crisis fluster us in the face.

* * *

Padolina said that in the history of our country we have suffered rice shortages but they rarely lasted more than a few months. Usually in the last 70s with Ninoy in 80s most of the time we relied on rice importation. The average consumption of each Filipino is about 120 kilos of rice a year, he noted. This means we need about 8.5 million metric tons of milled rice per year to feed our population, in addition to maintaining 2 million metric tons of buffer stock for emergencies as required under the Food Security Act.

But unfortunately, many factors have conspired to affect the world stock, so that nations are now faced with the question of whether there's enough to go around. The World Food Programme Valerie Guarnieri's recently said that ten countries are close to the 10 years. There are reports that some rice-exporting countries no longer want to sell the shocked them out with Pakistan and he noted that only 6 percent of the rice produced and sold in the world, or 30 million metric tons, is traded. Of that total, 60 percent is planted in Asia, but as regions lose land use, China and India, the major producers, are turning into net rice importers. Padolina, citing data from the International Rice Research Institute, also identified global warming. He explained that a 1oC degree centigrade increase in optimum temperature results in a 10 percent decline in rice harvest, which is equivalent to 10 million "rice-meals" eaten (e.g., against drought or excessive rain), is a congestion and adoption strategy. At 1,000 kilos of water per hectare to harvest rice, I learned, for example, that 1 kilo of rice is equivalent to 1,000 liters of water. Padolina also pointed out that another factor is that many young people around the world don't want to go into agriculture and that "many of those think food grows on of supermarket shelves."

Walking away

CAN ANYONE SERIOUSLY SAY "NO, THANK YOU" AND WALK away from the lure of power, fame and money?

In February 2006, I started working as a legislative officer of a senator of the Republic. This job was my ticket to the last rung of power in the Philippine representation. As a lawyer fresh out of law school, I could not help but be overwhelmed by the immensity of the power entrusted to me. I had a singular view of the inner workings of the Senate. I saw how the mundane affairs of our country ruled the most arid, health crucial decisions during crunch time. And I witnessed many people demonized in quiet as the senate ended its first ten very year.

YOUNG BLOOD

Lesley Jeannine T. Cordero

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twenty-something and below. — Ed.

A dream job for any young lawyer? Maybe. But just when I thought that I was riding the wave of success, reality knocked me hard on the head.

In October 2006, I made the very difficult decision to leave the great job that I actually enjoyed. I had been chosen to represent the Philippines in a Youth Exchange Program in China for two months, and I was so excited and immediately applied for leave without pay. My boss disapproved my application for leave and his people pressured me to stay. The offers were tempting, but I recall saying, "No, thank you, but I think someone else is more deserving of these opportunities than I am." And right then and there, I realized that I had to resist my temptation and simply walk away.

At that time, I was eager to say least for not giving me enough credit for the work I had done for him. Worse, he did not even have the decency to drop the people working for him if one resigning or quit on their commitment.

After I resigned, I felt so scared. Has a day passed when I did not doubt my decision. For some time, I would imagine breaking people asking in whispers why I gave up a position that so many people were aspiring for? Hell, maybe it was sheer pride or just plain disillusionment with my ex-boss and politics.

After two months, I was finally convinced that I had made the right decision. When I left for China, I took a leap of faith not knowing what was in store for me here. But when I came back, I realized that the whole experience taught me how to trust myself more and to have faith in God. Like everyone else, I want to work for a boss who can inspire me, at least who does not only have the ambition but the conviction to make tough decisions.

But my story does not end there. In December 2006, I came home after completing the exchange program, worried to death because I was jobless and had no concrete plans. But as they say, God writes a straight line in crooked writing, so if you cannot understand His plan then you just have to trust His hand.

In the middle of January, I got two text messages from four successful candidates to join their campaign teams. And one of those offers came from the camp of my former boss. Before the month ended, I was on board the campaign team of one of the promising contenders for senator.

I have been running into many former bosses at ATC during lunch assigned to head the legal team of my campaign. I felt that this was my second shot to power, connections and fame. I am at the table with important people discussing future politics. I know this doesn't last a national campaign was necessary and somehow I was going to be a part of it. Then in the election, I got to meet and interact with some of the most powerful people in the country. And I had the privilege of participating in and arguments before the Supreme Court in two controversial cases in a span of one month. What more can a young lawyer ask for? I was in the right environment.

In July 2007, my boss was finally proclaimed senator. After everything that happened in the campaign, who would have thought that I would walk away again from the center of politics, power and connections. I was invited to head the legislative team of my boss, but I politely declined his invitation. I had my reasons and I remember I wondered out loud to my mom, but I just smiled.

Perhaps the answer still lurkeres until today that I cherished his offer because I went to China on a scholarship program. For much to tell, I had reached a stage where I felt that I would not be challenged anymore. I had already achieved the utmost that serving for two was no longer an option. The good guy and the power one might get from working in the Senate are quite tempting, but they are not enough. The whole experience taught me that in life, characters, integrity and honesty are more important. They are non-negotiables, and they cannot be faked. Either you have them or you don't, and when you have them you don't sell out.

Now that I am away from Philippine politics, I still want the unbeatable rush of knowing the inside stories behind political events. But I have no regrets about walking away from it all. Walking away from one dream opens up another. Walking away does not mean you are weak. Sometimes walking away is the bravest and most difficult thing to do.

Someone once told me that tests and moments of character come when we walk away and when we refuse less than what we deserve. I am not saying that I am perfect. I still watch before you allow yourself to be dragged into the false promises of power, fame and money. A colleague once told me, "Lesley, you will not get up everything I had at that moment. I just said, "Watch me!"

Today, I am in a place that is far enough to give me a good perspective of my past. I am happy in the renewed circle where I used to be, and I believe that I made the decision to walk away was one of the toughest that I have made in my lifetime yet, one that can really stand of "walking away does not mean running away from a challenge, but walking away does not mean running away from a challenge, but walking away does not mean running away from back to an opportunity for the test of your life. Sometimes, it just takes a moment of courage and for less than what you deserve. Or it can simply be taking a good break and rediscovering yourself for true bigger and better consultant.

Lesley Jeannine T. Cordero, 27, is currently studying at the Beijing Language and Culture University in China.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

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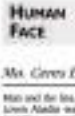
Spratlys on my mind

HUMAN FACE

Mrs. Corres P. Dayo



MODERNLY THERE IS WAR, INDASAL A LITTLE prize island floating on a sea of kingdom bliss. Our small An Kuan plane felt like a broken bird flying in that windy moment. And I remembered the famous palm philosopher Aristotle de Stalin Sargent's words: "Below the sea of clouds lies eternity."

After some more hours of eternal sea and sky from Pampanga, there is a sea. Yes, the Pearl Harbor has sunk and plane circled just a little longer to allow us to hear our ears on the proscribed emerald isle and take photographs and then came down with a right thud and my ears plugged with pressure.

I wasn't prepared—was it the Spratley Group of Islands claimed by the Philippines—many years ago when the issue of possession and ownership was again in the international news. The Spratly Islands are also claimed by China, Taiwan, Vietnam and Malaysia and Brunei making the area a "disputed territory." Is it the Palawan Island that the Philippines claims are called Kalayaan or Free Territory group of islands.

Today the Spratlys are again a hot item in the Philippine media because of the 2006 Republic Act on Archipelagic Philippines had with Chinese and Vietnam's fresh administrations and because of the constant rebellion of not the backgrounding to do with the recent discovery of RP 3,000-kind oil in Chinese that has been stoking the political landscape in the past months.

I had wanted several times to go to Spratlys. The day came and I was not to go. There we were, a few journalists, the Air Force officers and crew. Early in touch, we were by just the South China Sea, 295 nautical miles off Puerto Princesa, Palawan, far enough to say we were no longer in the regular map of the country but close enough for islands. We were definitely within Philippine territory.

We stepped out into the open and were met by were still don't know them. If not for their snappy salutes and wooden human uniforms, they could have come straight out of Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls."

Men and the like." Then the Navy chief rep, Gen. Lewis Alaska was on his first visit there as commanding general and we were invited to come along.

Occupancy is possession. That seems to be the law of the sea in these parts. Since the 1950s when the Philippines took over nine islands, Philippine troops have always been stationed there. We have been only eight islands, I think, from those nine mentioned by the Philippines. The Philippines abandoned Pagasa Island in the 1980s. Vietnamese were left frightening speed and has since held sway.

Pag-asa, the main and biggest Philippine-occupied island (32.4 hectares), is where most of the Bases and navy troops are stationed. There is another major base there. At that time, the newcomer islands had their watching over from sea. Security personnel to boat dredging was many men were stationed there.

I did write a long series on the Spratlys and learned a lot in the process. I also did get to have over Tessy "the admiral" Cruz, the navy wife, in 1956, made a "Proclamation to the Whole World" asserting ownership over the islands. Cloma's claim was short-lived, and it was the Philippine government in 1967 to declare ownership over what it described "Newfoundland Islands."

Each century's historic invasion a century of occupation. Japan had occupied the lands at the time during. And while for many long years, various Spratly occupants had lived peaceably side by side, there had been hostilities, as in the case of Vietnam and China in 1988, a bloody clash between the two countries over some reefs resulted in more than 70 deaths and other tremendous ships sunk.

The issue of overlapping claims was never so clear. There is dramatic tension. While the Philippines occupies only eight islands, it claims all. Its who owns the Spratlys?

It is not a question of who possesses the perfect title but who among the contending parties has the greater title. This was what the late Chief Justice Supreme Court Reynato Puno, stated in a speech before the UP graduate and Graduate Study conference. She was also an expert on the Spratlys. In international law, she said, that is how conflicting claims to territory are resolved.

As Catholic chief, were pushed for election in February which became the 21st Municipality of Palawan. Reza said then that she would argue the Philippines' claim over all 53 Spratly islands. The Philippines only has eight islands, a claim

A movement beyond Ms Arroyo's imagination

THEY PUT THE POWER TO PEOPLE POWER shows the same image: Raised fists and people flooded streets.

The photos of the Makati rally the student-led campaign, the Edsa Shaw, the Senate hearings are like one big collage that represents the many forged across sectors, groups, generations and economic classes.

Every people power reverberates with a harmonious melody yet of contrasting beats: one angry, demanding accountability... Gobyerno, tama na, ayan na Gloria!, the other proclaiming love of country and a longing for freedom, inevitably serving, without fail, nationalist public—dayain ka, hindi ka, kasabuk sa dibdib, Pilipinas kong minamahal, pagod ng labis-labis! dahil, at ng sobra, hindi ito kayang salakay pa.

The movement rejects the dubious propaganda being peddled by President Macapagal-Arroyo's lackeys: the spin that the people are tired of People Power. The Palace apologists are blinded by their illusions. Don't they see that a people power is already on the rise?

The rallies, the illusion, the silent protests and the rising tide of activism in campuses, all calling for GMA's resignation, represent a movement borne out of rage against a morally bankrupt government, a movement searching for truth and justice in the midst of the rubbish of lies, corruption, political crimes and moral depravation that the in-your-face administration has come to represent.

The people are tired of the culture of impunity, of the brazen attempts to whitewash anomalous deals, of the arrogance of power, of the lack of remorse, of the feeling of insecurity in their own country.

With these denials and lies, the President and her team show nothing but contempt for the Filipino people, for their unrealistic pride and for their part in empire over oppressive economies, corrupt rulers and repressive regimes.

But with the church people, the youth and the masses leading the current people's movement, Ms Arroyo and her cohorts will have their comeuppance. This movement for accountability, truth, justice and peace will restore the Filipino peoples' faith in their own strength and moral convictions, which for so long a time have been wrecked and degraded by Filipinos who, enamored by their insatiable greed for power and money, have robbed their backs on their heritage.

In GMA, be warned: a peoples' movement, stronger than you can imagine, is already on the rise.

—RAE DINGEL,
Ecclesiastican Youth,
University of Mindanao,
Matina, Davao City

Are the President's men this stupid?

I WAS DISAPPOINTED TO HEAR MELISSA Ohlstein-Gutierrez's analysis—could you call it that?...of the present situation. ("Questions for Lozada, Lacson et al," Inquirer, 2/23/08) viz. Stable Lacson planned mess (or all?) of the details of this grand conspiracy against the heroic administration?

She said "that there was a grand design of opposition leaders, led by Senator Panfilo Lacson and Jamby Madrigal, is up the authorities who, perhaps out of naïveté or eagerness to help the President, fell for the trap." Did she just say that these government officials are stupid? Be the one correct in saying that.

But she was wrong to think that the President's men needed the two senator. Commoding fan of either) or anyone even, poses their stupidity and by how much will they despise to keep themselves and their money in power. Rodolfo Lozada Jr. has nothing but facts to defend himself with.

There are many reasons why Gutierrez's "analysis" is wrong, but let me just mention one. She surely could not have missed how Ortiz Omerso General Avelino Razon first claimed that, before Lozada's arrival, his sister had written to the PNP to request protection for her brother. And then Razon said the police made her write her request only after Lozada arrived in Manila. Later Razon would admit that she wrote no request and that his directive to his subordinates to provide Lozada with security was illegal precisely by a phone call from Intel. Palawan Secretary Joselito Mendoza.

Yes, Lozada's wife, children and siblings had been "terrorized" with him at la Salle Green Hills when the family filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus and a series of subpoenas. Why did they still petition for the writs?

Remember, the family was under severe stress. And Lozada was still then being guarded by policemen and presumably held against his will. The police were asking him and his relatives to sign documents under duress. They even ordered Bro. Felipe Bellocaran to let the media in to UCCP. This after police operatives, armed with guns, had taken Lozada on a "joyride" for several hours!

I think it's clear to many Filipinos that there was conspiracy to take Lozada in to "police custody." Here there other conspiracies and conspirators!

—RAE DINGEL,
magdalenedingel@gmail.com

JUN Lozada at University of Tex. Tomas, his alma mater

Tan misinformed on pill's dangers

MICHAEL L. TAN'S COLUMN "WHY, in Quezon City" (Inquirer, 3/3/08) once again highlights the differences in views of population-control advocates and the majority of Filipinos, rich and poor, who are more concerned about primary health than whether they can receive free pills from the barangay.

What bothered me most was his allegation that the so-called "conservative" are spreading misinformation about family planning methods. (e.g., that the pill causes cancer). It is a fact that oral contraceptive pills indeed cause cancer.

In July 2005, the World Health Organization's IARC stated that the risk was doubtful, that contraceptives (oral monopausal therapy) are carcinogenic. [http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Meetings/vol91-k3.html] Other organizations have downplayed the risk. But it is not correct for Tan to say that there is misinformation on this matter.

—JESS FRANCISCO,
magnificatus@excite.com

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Counsel takes exception to Monsod's column

AS COUNSEL FOR JUN LOZADA, I TAKE EXception to the column of Solita Monsod where she insisted that Jun Lozada withdrawn his testimony to put her very good friend, lawyer Pilly Arroyo, in a tight fight. ("Let the readers judge the lawyers," Inquirer, 3/6/08)

First of all, the Senate typewriter was deadly skewed that Lozada testified that it was Sen. Alonzo who brought him to the house of lawyer Pilly Arroyo. He never said that the lady lawyer ever invited him to her house. Instead, Cedrick Sandiko's interviews with him was aired after his Senate testimony where he merely said he was invited to go to their house.

If it was true that Lozada withdrawn his testimony, it would have been to specify the details of the meeting as to who brought him there and what transpired. This was what he did; he specified in his Senate testimony that it was Alonzo who brought him to lawyer Pilly Arroyo's house.

Not once did Lozada mention in his Senate testimony or in the Sandiko interview that lawyer Pilly Arroyo was the one who invited him to her house. But let us not forget the circumstances by which Lozada testified with respect to his meeting with Alonzo and lawyer Pilly Arroyo.

If Monsod had reproduced the entire sequence between Senator Antonio and Lozada, the readers would learn more that the senator was already initially hostile with Lozada. Without going through the records of the petitions of Subano copies and annexes that Lozada's wife and brother filed before the Supreme Court, the anti-Lozada senator immediately reprimanded Lozada for disrespecting the true facts and then he accused Lozada of being biased and in bad faith for just speaking to opposition people. There was no question from the senator as to why Lozada mentioned his meeting with the senator's wife.

I am just as aghast at the negative text message that lawyer Pilly Arroyo sent the palace at her work in the Constitutional Commission speaks of her integrity that those facts were way beyond Lozada's control and should not be blamed on Lozada or laid on his doorstep. I think Professor Monsod knows better.

—ERWIN LACIERDA, lacierda@gmail.com

Only a great marketing man can do a Lozada

GOOD SPEAKERS MAKE A STUMP first, lost kindling enthusiasm (for one) stinks to a matter of time. The Lozada version of the NBN-ZTE story readily flies because the person telling the story speaks eloquently and he projects himself as a witness-victim (betrayed with the NBN project). Causing Jun's statement who claims to be an insider to the ZTE negotiations, the story sounds believable to many Filipinos. The "testimonies" of Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada make me believe that the great speaker is also a great marketing man, and I have reasons for reaching this conclusion.

1. The $329-million commission. Definitely, a very big percentage on the $329-million NBN project—no company in the "savings" of the pretending winners like Mahindra and Mahee. Only a great marketing man can make such profits from such deals; not even politicians make that much money their usual kickback is only 10 percent.

2. Lozada's claim that he is an insider to the ZTE deal is fully broken; he is neither a representative of the National Economic Development Authority, nor of the said entity's Board, nor of ZTE nor of the institution financing the project. The representatives of those connecting parties are the ones who can tell the cost and acceptance story about the deal; they are the ones to whom people should lend their ears.

3. Lozada's supporters are soliciting financial contributions to support his family. It is not the same Lozada who played golf in Black Rock, an exclusive golf course (the most exclusive golf course in the country) that many Filipinos golf enthusiasts (by using fees because it is so costly)?

—EUSEBIO ESCUETA,
chito_pampa@yahoo.com.ph

Civil disobedience an antidote to corrupt gov't

THESE ARE TWO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS relapsements in the political life of our nation. But there is also an interesting and progressive development that may help our country rid itself of the politically bankrupt administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The first development is the proposed civil disobedience campaign against the oil-powered Arroyo government.

In the United States, Martin Luther King led a civil disobedience campaign which won equal civil rights for Black Americans.

I propose that, to avoid a bloody confrontation (Gen. Gringo Honasan sees this as a likelihood) and a prolonged protest movement that could sap the energy of our country, we embark on a massive civil disobedience campaign, just like what we did in 1986 when we ousted the Marcos dollar constitutions. The OWD are aware that their hated cancelers in the country could suffer from the "boycott of banks," but as we say, "no guts, no glory."

Most, specifically, I am suggesting to the protest leaders, former President Cory Aquino, Bayan Muna, Migrante, Black & White Movement, Integrated Bar of the Philippines, businessmen, etc. that they stop paying their taxes to the BIR. Only when the people refuse to obey the corrupt Arroyo administration out of Malacañang.

Inclusive here should be Lozada and Ilang, clerk Sandiko drama is estimated by international law to bring down a corrupt, exploitative and cruel government.

For myself, I am able, willing and ready to join this massive civil disobedience campaign, especially at this time of the year, with the deadline for this year's filing of income tax declaration coming shortly.

—PROSPERO S. BELTRAN JR.,
president@pbtlaw.com,
Philippine Trial Lawyers Association Inc.,
president@pbtlaw.com

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Tourism slumps in typhoid-hit Calamba

Puerto Princesa celebrates with a misunderstood flower

By Redempto Anda
Puerto Princesa City

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY HAS MOUNTED A tourism coup in officially recognizing an otherwise obscure orchid-like flower, drawing throngs of local and foreign visitors to the Palawan capital for a few more reasons aside from its pristine surroundings.

On the first week of March coinciding with the city's humdrum anniversary, activities have been organized around the "balayong" tree or Palawan cherry, a medium-sized shrub that sprouts pink and white-colored blooms akin to Japan's cherry tree or sakura blossoms during the first quarter.

The "balayong festival" became a hit as highlight of the city government's successful planting campaign that saw hundreds of trees planted along roads, bright with colorful flowers. The planting program encouraged officials to adopt an ordinance conferring the festival in the official tourism calendar.

But drowned out in the euphoria of festivities is a rumor-fostered fact that, according to a prominent Filipino biologist, the Palawan cherry is neither a cherry nor a species endemic to Palawan. Rexcelie Leonard Co of the Conservation International chanced upon the plant [Cinnamomum mindorense] as an introduced species from Luzon in Indonesia.

"The name Palawan cherry is a misnomer," said Co, who added that the shrub is a legume belonging to the Fabaceae family.

Around 500 seedlings were prepared for this year's version of the festival.

According to city tourism officer Bonie Mohammad, tourist arrivals have rapidly peaked over the last three years and that the availability of hotel rooms has become a serious concern.

"Around this time of the celebrations, it has become very difficult for tourists to book hotel accommodations and we think that one of the reasons for the increase in traffic is this week-long activities," Mohammad said.

THE "BALAYONG" tree or Palawan cherry, a medium-sized shrub with pink and white flowers similar in Japan's cherry tree blossoms. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

By Bernadz Perez
San Pablo City

TOURISM ACTIVITIES IN Calamba City, Laguna's popular resort town south of Metro Manila, have slumped along with 1,700 people afflicted by typhoid fever that broke out a week ago.

The number of regular visitors of the resort facilities, mostly hot springs in the city, has decreased because of the bad image spawned by incidence reports of the disease caused by a water-borne bacteria, according to provincial tourism chief Gina Austria.

More than 200 resorts are found in Calamba and in the neighboring town of Los Baños at the foot of a dormant volcano, Mt. Makiling.

Fewer customers

Jaime Uri, an officer of Mercurio Hotel-ng Resort and Conference Center in Pansol village, said 60 percent of the resort's regular customers had not come since the outbreak was reported in newspapers and television. She described this development as "alarming."

During previous weekends, the place used to receive more than 400 visitors who enjoy swimming and other activities there. Only 100 to 200 customers have remained loyal, Uri said.

Last week, she said, five groups that had already booked and paid deposits cancelled their reservations due to the fear brought about by the disease.

Alberto M. Cervancia, general manager of the Calamba City Water District (CWD), expressed doubts about findings made by the Department of Health on Monday that contaminated water from its central distribution system had caused the typhoid outbreak.

In a phone interview, Cervancia said his office did not know how the sampling was made and if the proper procedure was followed. Up to this time, he said, there was no clear-cut evidence yet to prove that the central distribution system was the source.

"The cause of the typhoid outbreak could not be easily ascertained in two weeks time and enough time is needed to survive as contributor results," Cervancia said. He requested that the DOH to repeat the testing process, but this time, in the presence of CWD specialists.

DOH health certificates

Tourists have nothing to worry about because the hot spring resorts possessed health certificates from the DOH to ensure that their water and swimming facilities are safe, Austria said. Water in Mainit-ng, Uri said, comes into Makiling's volcanic hot springs underground and undergoes systematic processes of purification. "Our resort waters are definitely safe," she said.

Uri said 19 members of the resort also suffered from typhoid and they were residents living around Pansol who might be using the waters coming from the city's water system.

But Cervancia said the city water system could not be singled out as the culprit because residents had plenty of water sources, such as pumps in homes and underground springs. The water table is just a few feet deep, he pointed out.

He dismissed as nonsense allegations that a decayed human body had been found floating inside the CWD's huge water tank recently. "If that is true, there, it would be the police who would be invest igating us here," he said.

Chris Sunji, provincial information officer, said tourists should not be discouraged from going to Laguna as the typhoid incidents was only confined to Calamba and was about to be contained.

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Thank you, Suzann Pettersen, for swinging by.

HSBC Golf Day teed off with one of LPGA's top-ranked female golfers last week at the Wack Wack Golf & Country Club. This was Suzann Pettersen's last stop after playing in the HSBC Women's Champions Tournament in Singapore.

Another winning stroke from HSBC Philippines.

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Across the NATION

NEWSBRIEFS

■ ISABELA

Balweg widow dies of cardiac arrest

THE WIDOW of slain rebel priest Conrado Balweg died of cardiac arrest at a military hospital in Tarlac, Isabela, on Monday.

Corazon Cortez-Balweg, 68, liaison officer of the Cordillera People's Liberation Army, was on her way to this camp in Isabela up northeast proximity for CPLA members when she suffered the attack, initially when she felt chest pains and collapsed, Maj. Gen. Melchor Bitadra, commander of the Army's 5th Infantry Division, said.

She was taken to the camp's station hospital at about 4:45 a.m., but she died an hour later.

Balweg left four children.

Fillemon Visaya Jr.
Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ CEBU CITY

Junk foods banned in, out of schools

THE SELLING of junk foods in canteens and around schools under a newly passed resolution by the city council.

But the resolution failed to specify what items are considered junk foods. These are perceived to be unhealthy and have poor nutritional value, usually containing high levels of saturated fat, salt, sugar and additives, such as monosodium glutamate.

The council also ordered the city health office to check on the implementation of the resolution being sold in school canteens and stores outside school premises and to ensure that junk foods are concluded.

Ellen R. Rosario, Inquirer Visayas

■ COMPOSTELA VALLEY

Search for miner in Monkayo halted

RESCUERS have stopped searching for a trapped miner in a tunnel collapse on March 2 in Mt. Diwata in Monkayo, Compostela Valley, putting the official death toll at two.

Senior Insp. Antonio Rotoz, chief of the Diwata police station, said continuous downpour prevented rescuers from digging deeper as earth and small rocks were giving way.

Police and village officials identified the trapped miner as Isaiah Rosana Jr., 38, of Purok 12 in the same village that a native of Malita, Davao del Sur.

The body of Reda Pinantal, 45, was pulled out by soldiers, police and civilian volunteers hours after the exploration area of Baltazar tunnel in Purok 4 collapsed.

Antonio Lino, Inquirer Mindanao

■ ISABELA

Boy found dead in irrigation canal

AN 11-YEAR-OLD boy abducted on March 3 was found dead in an irrigation canal in Barangay Tabacalan in Santiago City in Isabela on Saturday.

Chief Insp. Pilarito Mallillin, chief of the city police's mobile group, said the body of Christian Jay Dollete, a Grade 6 pupil of La Salette of Santiago College, was found by a fisherman and a companion in the canal in Tabacalan.

Police said Dollete was abducted by a group of men in front of his schoolmate Rikangela Dollete.

Dollete, whose face was disfigured, was identified by his parents through the clothes he was wearing when he disappeared.

Fillemon Visaya Jr.
Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ GENERAL SANTOS CITY

Drug police, companion killed in videoke house

AN AGENT of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) was wounded while his female companion and a friend were killed when three unidentified men shot them inside a videoke house in General Santos City shortly before midnight of Tuesday.

Killed were May Flor Librada and Ariel Simola, one of the bar owners. PDEA Bobby Gonzales was hit in the left leg.

Chief Supt. Raimundo Martinez, deputy city police director, said the killers' target could be the PDEA agent.

Agustes Z. Zoom
Inquirer Mindanao

Dengue grips Zamboanga City

ZAMBOANGA CITY—THE CITY GOVERNMENT has declared a dengue outbreak after a sharp increase in the number of people affected by the mosquito-borne illness was recorded.

The city health office listed 400 dengue cases, with two deaths, from January to March 11.

Mayor Celso Lobregat said before a local health summit here on Tuesday that the declaration was made upon the recommendation of city health officials.

He called on village officials and residents to band together to fight the menace.

"Barangay officials and the committees on health have to be very active because this campaign cannot be done by the City Health office alone as even officials from City Hall at city government officials, we need all the support from everyone," Lobregat said.

Among the immediate measures taken was a citywide dengue drive.

Dengue-carrying mosquitoes lay their eggs on clean stagnant waters.

Aghahari said the target of the cleanup drive was villages where incidents of dengue was exceptionally high, such as Camino, San Mario, Tumaga, Talon-talon, Santa Catalina and Tetuan.

Aghahari noted a sharp increase in the number of dengue cases reported to the CHO during the past weeks.

In 2007, only 93 cases were monitored from January to March. There is compared to the same period this year, which had 386 cases already, he said. "It's alarming [but] we are trying to do everything to control [the spread of the disease]," he said.

The declaration of an outbreak was the second for the city since 2005, when dengue cases shot up to 618 over a six-month period. **Julie E. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao**

TOBACCO SKEWING
Tobacco growers in Candon City, Ilocos Sur show their tobacco leaves for curing. High prices inspire them to harvest the leaves.

Quezon protesters urge nation to unite for truth

LUCENA CITY—BAREFOOT STUDENTS and teachers of the Sacred Heart College (SHC), a Catholic school in Quezon province, on Wednesday called on the public to join the queue to unmask the truth behind the series of scandals rocking the government.

"What we're asking is for Ms Arroyo to accept responsibility," said Sr. Leticia Asuncion Garcia, member of the Daughters of Charity and SHC president, during a rally given the dubbed "Mass for Truth, Accountability and Reform."

The school grounds were bedecked with posters that read: "We seek the truth!" "We want reform!" and "We demand accountability!"

In habitus worn, retired Bishop Julio Labayen led 25 priests and two nuns, in singing prayers for justice and unity in the nation in the quest for peace.

In a pastoral statement issued on March 6, the religious under the petitioner that seven northern Quezon and Aurora province said the corruption-laden 2TG-NBN deal vitiates scandals in government like the North and South railways project and the Jocson level, now some have all become major concerns of the State Operation Commission.

Garcia said the Mass upheld the guidelines of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) on how to address the series of scandals in the government.

The CBCP pastoral statement last month drew a strong rebuke from and Arroyo critics for not calling for the resignation of the President. However, the rite stressed the importance of "moral leadership" of all government officials from President Macapagal-Arroyo to the lowest level in the bureaucracy.

FR. SALA. Enriquez (center) leads other religious in the "Dagunguan ng Tiyan Para sa Katotohanan," a movement of concern about corruption among government officials.

Last week, Lucena Bishop Emilio Marquez said "the Gloria reign call is political. And we bishops should not engage in partisan politics."

Garcia, a veteran of protest movements, observed that the widely publicized scandals involving government people had sparked a growing social movement among the X-generation.

"They are now beginning to ask questions and it's a good development," she said.

The Manchurian bundle the jampacked SHC gymnasium was crowded by about 2,500 people composed of high school and college students, faculty and visitors who were all asked to remove their footwear before entering the gymnasium.

State evidence Fr. Trevor Moran, a La Salle priest from Cavite, and his three co-defendants from different Quezon parishes led by activist priest Fr. Noel Enriquez, were all barefoot while officiating the religious rites.

"Being barefoot inside the venue of the solemn activity is a reminder at all that we should always remain lowly on the ground. It is a sacred place for our departed ancestors, so we are call to help us in our present plight," said Jay Lim, spokesperson of the Kapatiring Alay sa Katotohanan ng Bayan or Kaakbay-Quezon who helped organized the mobilization.

After the Mass, Enriquez presented a video message of Lozada that urged the youth "not to stop their quest for truth." **Delfin F. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon**

E. Visayas execs urged to prioritize safe water

By Joey A. Gabinta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—HEALTH officials have urged mayors in Eastern Visayas to give priority to the delivery of safe water to their waterborne diseases that have been plaguing many towns and cities in the region.

The waterborne division of the Department of Health-Eastern Visayas (DOH-8) office has monitored that poor access to safe water among households was the reason diarrhea ranks second among leading diseases in Eastern Visayas.

"That is why we are appealing to our local leaders in Eastern to providing safe water to our people as a basic minimum, if not avoid, getting these waterborne diseases like diarrhea or typhoid fever," said Alberto Rivera, division chief.

Waterborne diseases killed 402 people in the region in 2006 and claimed 244,354 others, mostly children, with diarrhea, according to DOH-8 records for 2006.

Rivera said only 92 percent of the households had access to safe water. This means only 623,084 of the 768,431 households in the region at the time of the monitoring, Rivera said.

The DOH defines safe water as free from contamination of diseases and/or has undergone some chemical treatment.

Rivera said the most common source of drinking water are open spring and shallow deep wells, which are prone to contamination by diseases that become causes of waterborne diseases.

These sources had neither been given the mandatory maintenance nor undergone chemical treatment, he said.

Of the six provinces in the region, Northern Samar and Samar had the lowest in terms of safe water, with only 72,387 of its 109,574 households. Samar followed with 36,879 out of 84,211 households.

One of Leyte's 275,389 households, 238,609 have safe water.

Eastern Samar, which was badly hit by flooding in February, had 71,879 out of 80,643 households with safe water access. In Biliran, 98 percent of the households have access to safe water.

Union hits Cavite cops for premature conclusion

CALAMBA CITY—THE UNION of shop labor leader Gerry Crisostal decried as "conspiratorial" the statements made by police officials that his murder was caused by a traffic altercation.

In a statement sent to the Inquirer, the Samahan ng mga Manggagawa sa SMI said the police claims were "very suspicious."

"Why have they already jumped to a conclusion when the investigation is not yet over?" it said.

Crisostal, 39, union president in the Japanese semiconductor firm Sind Saniki for 13 years and official of the federation of Cavite laborers (KW), was shot deadly at least three times while he was driving on Monday morning in front of his house in Carsite.

The union alleged that less than an hour after the shooting, police had cleaned up the place and brought the victim's body to a funeral parlor.

"It was also strange how the attacker was able to flee easily from the crime scene when in fact the road was usually busy with traffic especially on Mondays between 7 to 8 a.m.," it added.

The fact that three gunmen used long firearms was one proof it was not just a traffic altercation but an ambush, the union alleged.

"We firmly believe that the murder of Crisostal seeks to quell our rights to organize and it is now his turning on," it said.

Crisostal was the third union official to be killed. The first was Cito Rosal, vice president, who was killed in 2005.

Two years ago, Jesus Bautista Servida, former vice president, was killed by a lone gunman in front of the gate of the semiconductor factory in Imus.

Two attempts were earlier made on Crisostal's life on April 28, 2006 and on Feb. 9, 2007.

Cavite police director Senior Supt. Fidel Pasudan laughed off the allegations that these were connected with the killing.

"Why would we do that? We did not violate the law, and if he did, we would arrest him instead of killing him," he said, adding that Crisostal was his friend. **Alika Carlos-Ino Carlejo, Inquirer Southern Luzon**

GERRY Crisostal, former president of the workers' union of the Japanese semiconductor firm Sind Pasaki and an official of the Solidarity of Cavite Workers.

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PHILIPPINE CHARITY SWEEPSTAKES OFFICE

Walang Kupas.

Poll feud brings tension to Pampanga town

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

MAGALANG, PAMPANGA—TENsion gripped this town on Wednesday as Mayor Lyndon Cunanan continued to resist for the second day the takeover of basic premises Barangay Poreos in this town's new mayor on the order of a reorganized trial court on March 11.

To prevent possible clashes between the supporters of Cunanan and Poreos, the Philippine National Police deployed 40 more policemen to the town on Wednesday. They complemented the 15 heavily armed troops that the police's provincial mobile group sent on Tuesday.

"There is still disturbance over, but not yet. As of this time, we haven't received any order from our commanders to install Mr. Poreos as the mayor's counselor to assume his office," the general commander, Senior Insp. Dionardo Solasco, said.

About 70 paramilitary troops have been on the back of the town hall since Tuesday night, apparently to back up Cunanan.

The Department of Interior and Local Government officers in Pampanga or General Luna have not issued any ultimatum for Cunanan to step down.

Citing "mathematical error," Cunanan on Thursday filed a petition asking the Commission on Elections to annul the Angeles City Rtc's (notable Branch of the regional trial court in Angeles City) from rescinding a writ installing Poreos as the new mayor of Magalang.

However, Comelec Commissioner Rene Sarmiento dismissed Cunanan's petition for its inconclusiveness.

Sarmiento ruled in a resolution issued on March 6 that "using the correct formula, [Poreos] still obtained a plurality of the votes cast and enjoyed a margin of 384 votes over [Cunanan]."

Wilfredo Sta. en wide as the margin found by the trial court, Cunanan's camp is somewhat that the victory of [Poreos] has been clearly established in the statement's decision."

The error, Sarmiento added, was "purely mathematical" and did "not affect the final outcome of the election protest."

Comelec Commissioner Nicodemo Ferrer dissented, saying that the total number of votes based on the lower court's computation was 38,306 (instead of 28,771).

"This is a discrepancy that hardly leads to conclusion that the decision was correctly arrived at," Ferrer said. Three candidates ran for mayor here in the May 14, 2007 election.

Cunanan argued that his lead diminished when the court recalculated some 200 votes for him because these were allegedly written by one or two persons.

If a review of the results of the recount was made, he said he still would lead by more than 300 votes.

Poreos urged his rival to stop citing technical matters that had already been resolved by the regional trial court. "The court has ruled that I am the winner. The true will of the people should now prevail," he said.

Investors in the town had been heavily suspended. Residents paying their real estate taxes or doing other business with the local government were have grumbling.

Cunanan and around 300 supporters had since holed up at the mayor's office on the second floor of the town hall. The front and rear doors had been closed and secured by steel bars. Those have stopped the court sheriff, Vicente Sese, from serving a copy of the writ of execution in Cunanan. Sese instead posted the writ at the main entrance of the town hall and formalized a copy to Vice Mayor Herman Lacson.

About 300 more supporters of Cunanan had rallied at the right side of the hall's grounds.

After claiming that Judge Ma. Magdalena Balderrama of the municipal trial court had overstepped his office on Wednesday, Cunanan occupied the mayor's office in a building beside the town hall. About 500 of his supporters had gathered at the left side of the grounds.

GRADUATION PREPARATION
Workers at the Philippine Military Academy raise the grass seats still house graduating cadets of Regular Class of 2008 next week. Unlike previous graduation rites, the event was scheduled on Sunday afternoon to accommodate the schedule of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

NBI says investment scam execs had fled abroad

By Tina G. Santos

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF Investigation will coordinate with its counterparts in countries where the two officials of Royal Investment Firm Trading Corp. (RIMFI), a company allegedly engaged in billion-peso investment scam, reportedly fled.

Ferdinand Lavin, head of the NBI Anti-Human Trafficking Division, said he received information from the Bureau of Immigration that RIMFI president Cyrus Ong Sao (left) for Kenya on March 2. On the other hand, Renato San Juan, who was earlier reported to be the firm's vice president for marketing, reportedly left for the United States on March 6.

Lavin, however, said the BAP documents the NBI had gathered showed that San Juan was not named an official or an incorporator.

"Through our Interpol, we will coordinate with our counterparts in those countries to determine the whereabouts of Mao and San Juan," Lavin told reporters.

He said that it was also possible that the two officials left the country apparently to avoid the annual stockholders meeting scheduled every first Monday of March.

"That could be the reason they left the country, they pre-empted everybody."

He said the bureau was also looking into the possibility of securing hold departure orders against the company's other officials, namely, Joseph Bunda, Severina Ty, Edwin Rosas and Jonathan Colina.

"We'll wait for other complainants, gather more evidence then inform the Department of Justice so these people could be placed on a hl watchlist," Lavin said. "We'll check with our overall agents to determine if these people have other criminal records."

Citing documents obtained from the Securities and Exchange Commission, the NBI official also said the company was only authorized to engage in car trading, not currency trading, business.

"It's not allowed to solicit funds for purposes of investment," Lavin added. "There was clearly a violation of the SEC law."

The investment scam reportedly victimized around 3,000 people, including prisoners and celebrities, the NBI said.

To date, at least six people have surfaced to file complaints at the NBI.

"But we expect more victims to show up. Many have already called up saying they're willing to cooperate and provide us with other information," Lavin said.

The investors claimed that they were told their money was being traded to Denmark and other European countries.

AFP asked to surface nabbed Muslim cleric

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE FAMILY OF one of two alleged terrorists arrested by government agents in Boracay Island over the weekend has called on the Armed Forces to surface them for allow and enhanced.

Abdul Basit said his younger brother Muhammad Nasir and his brother-in-law Al Mahdhar Bonaipal are imams (Muslim clerics) and not connected to any terror group.

"I know my brother. He is not a terrorist," Basit told the reporter in a telephone interview yesterday.

Abduction

Basit, 27, and Bonaipal, 24, were forcibly taken by at least seven heavily armed men in plain clothes around 6:45 p.m. on Saturday on the island resort, Basit said.

The two were on their way for their community prayer at the local Muslim (religious school) in Sitio Amblong, Barangay Manoc-Manoc in the southern end of the island resort when the armed men took them, he said.

One of the men fired at least two warning shots after Bonaipal refused to go with them, creating commotion in the resort, according to Abdul. He said witnesses saw the armed men forced the two inside a Suzuki All Purpose Vehicle (APV) before speeding away.

No coordination

A report of the Boracay Special Tourist Police Office (BSTPO) confirmed that the armed men who took the two Muslim terror operatives of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp).

BSTPO chief Senior Insp. Analita Linder said in a report to the Police Regional Office 6 that Isafp agents did not coordinate with their office for the operation.

He said that policemen who responded to the incident proceeded to the Army detachment to help Pemil Bagcal in Barangay Bapak in the northern end of the island when they learned that the armed men were Isafp operatives. The policemen were informed by soldiers in the detachment that the two men were alleged members of the Abu Sayyaf Group and were already brought to the Malay municipal hall to be turned over to the Army headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. on Monday confirmed the arrest of a terror suspect, not two, in Boracay over the weekend. Esperon said that the arrested person is allegedly part of an international plot to bomb foreign embassies and assassinate prominent personalities.

No warrant

Mahdi deplored the manner in how his brother and his friend were taken, saying that the armed men failed to show any arrest warrant and they also did not inform them of the whereabouts of the two detainees.

He said they have not seen or heard from the two since they were taken.

Mahdi, a pearl vendor in the same resort where they were taken, said his brother and Bonaipal are friends and schoolmates at the Al-Mustafi Education Center in Baguio City where they took up a Shariah course.

His brother also studied in Indonesia and has frequented Boracay to spend time with their family.

Teachers

Basit arrived with Bonaipal in January and have volunteered as teachers at the local Madrasah on the island while waiting for the passport to be issued for their trip to Saudi Arabia for further studies.

"The people here know our family and we do not have any bad record here," said Mahdi.

He said his brother has just obtained a diploma from the National Bureau of Investigation clearing he has no derogatory record.

"He was unacceptable," he said without elaborating on the contents of the draft agreement.

Emmanuel Joven Bautista, the President's adviser on the peace process, said he and government chief negotiator Rodolfo Garcia were met by Mrs. Arroyo on Tuesday at Malacañang.

He said the closed-door meeting this afternoon, the President met to where she went through the proposed agreement regarding the rebel's territory," Dureza said.

He said that after reading the draft government agreement, Mrs. Arroyo told him and Garcia to present it to the MILF and Kuala Lumpur, which is hosting the peace talks.

While saying that the President approved the draft agreement, Dureza was more what it seem all about.

The MILF has been demanding the inclusion of about 1,000 villages in the so-called Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE) without plebiscite.

The government has rejected that saying the establishment of any entity should only be considered within the ambit of the Constitution.

"That only shows the government is serious in negotiating with them (MILF)," Dureza said of the President's order.

In Iligan, Lanao del Sur, the MILF declared that it would continue to pursue peace with the government.

The declaration was contained in a resolution passed by the MILF central committee after a three-day consultation with its field commanders and members.

Ghazali Jaafar, MILF political affairs chief, said the resumption of the talks now depends on the sincerity of the government. *Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao*

GMA wants to resume peace talks with MILF, says Dureza

COTABATO CITY—PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo met with her peace panel on Tuesday and ordered them to find ways to get the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) back on track.

The peace talks with the MILF hit a snag on Dec. 15 after the rebel group's panel pulled out of the negotiating table to protest the alleged unauthorized leaks into media by government negotiators to the draft agreement on ancestry.

Mohagher Iqbal, MILF chief negotiator, said the government peace panel inserted the phrase "constitutional process" in the draft agreement after it had been reviewed by Bankhaim by both panels.

"It was unacceptable," he said without elaborating on the contents of the draft agreement.

Secretary Jesus Dureza, the President's adviser on the peace process, said he and government chief negotiator Rodolfo Garcia were met by Mrs. Arroyo on Tuesday at Malacañang.

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ARMM cops fail to arrest alleged brains in 2005 slay of Esperat

COTABATO CITY—POLICE AUthorities in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) have failed to serve the warrants of arrest against the alleged masterminds in the 2005 murder of journalist Marlene Esperat.

Judge Simeon Bombom of the Pagalungan Shari'ah Court Branch in Cebu had ordered the arrest of Osmeña Mommalay, former finance officer of the Department of Agriculture in Central Mindanao, and Sonello Sabay, the agency's accountant.

The two agriculture officials were implicated by one of the four gunmen convicted in the Esperat murder.

ARMM police chief Chief Supt. Joel Tobias yesterday said police tried to serve the arrest warrants on Mommalay and Sabay but the two could no longer be found.

"Our policemen based in Malabang, Lanao del Sur tried to serve Mommalay's arrest warrant there but he was not around," Tobias said.

He said relatives of the suspects told arresting officers that they had no idea where they were.

"Binanonito and Sabay's relatives have no idea if they are hiding abroad or still in the country. But no one aware of justice dictim, we cannot find them," he said.

The suspects had earlier questioned the issuance of the arrest warrants, citing that their case with the Tacurong RTC for the same murder was already dismissed on Aug. 31, 2005.

However, Bombom upheld the issuance of the warrants, saying his court had assumed jurisdiction when the Supreme Court directed the transfer of the venue from Tacurong to Cebu.

Lawyer Nena Santos, the private prosecutor in the Esperat case, said she had already expressed apprehension about the delay in the serving of the warrants.

"I am afraid we will end up prosecuting the case without the mastermind," Santos said.

Esperat, a journalist for the weekly Midland Review, was gunned down beside her house in Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat while having dinner with her family on March 24, 2005.

She was believed killed because of her exposés about alleged corruption in the agriculture department, including the fertilizer scam.

In Davao City, another broadcaster claimed he received threats from unidentified individuals.

Elmer Isabela Yap, 50, a block-time announcer of radio dxDD yesterday said the threats came in the form of text messages and calls to his mobile phone.

Yap, who hosts "Tamsakog ng Puso Mindanao," a daily commentary program, said he had been told to be watch-ful because his days were numbered.

The threat came even as police authorities were still facing a block mail in connection with the December assassination of broadcaster Fernando "Nonoy" Lacunza.

Like Yap, Lacunza used his program over dxDD.

"Before Nonoy was killed, I also received a text saying I and Nonoy are of the same food-stuff," a visibly distressed Yap said. *Jeoffrey Maitem with reports from Ryan Rosauro and Orlando Dinoy, Inquirer Mindanao*

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MARCH 16 Pacquiao-Marquez Screening

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MARCH 16 Dog Fun Match

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Aplus METRO
Editor Boer C. Dipasupil

200 families face eviction

New homes for cops to rise inside Camp Karingal

By Marlon Ramos

MORE THAN 200 FAMILIES OF RETIRED AND active policemen living inside Camp Karingal in Sikatuna, Quezon City are facing eviction to give way to a multi-million "quartering project" for the officers of the Quezon City Police District.

But members of the Camp Karingal Personnel Neighborhood Association Inc., some of whom have been living in the area for more than 30 years, vowed to question the legality of the planned demolition of their homes next month.

The residents criticized the QCPD for "callously disregarding" their rights as stated in the Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992, otherwise known as the Lina Law.

Felon Villasis, the group's president, said the QCPD did not give them enough time to find a relocation site for their families.

"Under the law, it is very clear that they (QCPD officials) should provide us with a relocation site before they tear down our homes," she added.

Villasis said they held two dialogues with Senior Supt. Elmo San Diego, QCPD director for administration, but he refused to listen to their proposals.

One of their group's suggestions, Villasis said, was to delineate the boundary of the five-hectare camp through a fund survey. Most of the houses in the area are built outside the camp's territory, she said.

According to a document obtained by the INQUIRER, the five-hectare property where Camp Karingal is situated was leased by the University of the Philippines to the Philippine Constabulary through a memorandum of agreement dated Sept. 25, 1974. Under the agreement, the Constabulary, the forerunner of the Philippine National Police, would pay P1 annually or the UP for 50 years.

Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula, QCPD director, said they received order was needed to tear down "illegal structures" inside the camp.

He argued that since the property was leased to them "we have the right to do anything we want within the camp."

Ed Maclaroda, of the city government's Urban Poor Affairs Office, said there was no relocation site for the affected residents "because they cannot be considered as squatters."

READY FOR SUMMER
As the days heat up with the onset of summer, "tumbler's" (bed vendor Rosario Dizon, 51, displays his merchandise on sidewalk and pedestrians on Quezon Avenue in Manila. —

Lim backpedals on MMDA ticketing scheme

HAVE YOU SEEN CINDY?
If you have any information on the whereabouts of Ms. Cinderella "Cindy" Carvajal, 16, please contact her mother, Inquirer reporter Nancy C. Carvajal, at (917) 6339551 or the Inquirer help desk at 897-4195. Cindy was last seen on Tuesday in front of the Bais Credit Cooperative in Bais City

By CJ Yap and Jillian W. Lopez

ONE OF THE FIVE METRO Manila mayors opposed to the single ticketing traffic system backed by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority yesterday said he is now in favor of the scheme.

Another, however, reiterated his opposition to the MMDA proposal and even dared authorities to take him to court.

Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim said he would implement the Metro Traffic Ticketing System although he still believed that there was no need for it.

"I did not sign the [province-on the SETS] because of the belief that 'if it ain't broke, why fix it?' and the contention that we as government should never backpedal and be made hostage to the demands of a few," he said in a statement.

Lim, however, added that he would follow Executive Order 712 which empowers the MMDA to implement the single traffic ticketing system in the metropolis.

The EO was signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo during Tuesday's Cabinet meeting.

"I'll abide and respect the EO. Di ko (I) implement the single traffic ticketing system in the metropolis.

The EO was signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo during Tuesday's Cabinet meeting.

"I'll abide and respect the EO. Di ko (I) implement the single traffic ticketing system in the metropolis.

On the other hand, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay described the order as illegal and said it was the "latest addition to the catalog of illegal orders" issued by Malacañang.

"An executive order cannot supersede a national law," he said, adding that under the Local Government Code, cities and towns have the sole authority to regulate traffic in their jurisdiction.

Binay said the city government would not suspend its own Traffic Code and would continue issuing its own traffic tickets to erring motorists despite threats he could face charges for not complying with the EO.

"If the administration will file charges against me, then go ahead, make my day" the mayor said.

The City of Makati is among five local governments that have not approved the SETS. The others are the cities of Pasay, Manila, Taguig and Navotas.

Robbery gang tagged in foiled bank heist

By Tina G. Santos

THE MANILA POLICE DISTRICT has already identified the group believed to be behind the foiled attempt to rob a bank in Binondo Monday night.

Supt. Nelson Yabut, MPD Binondo station commander, said the man who barged into the East West Bank branch on Soler Street were members of the Alvin Flores Group, a robbery gang.

The group, Yabut added, was responsible for a series of bank robbery incidents in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

The MPD official said a bank watchman was able to identify one of the suspects, Herbert Cain, from photographs in police files.

DID YOU KNOW

OF THE NEARLY 800,000 marriages registered in the Philippines in 2000, almost 11 percent occurred in Metro Manila (more than 100,000 marriages). Southern Tagalog was the region with the second highest number of marriages (over 10,000), while the autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao had the lowest (over 1,000).

Cyril L. Bondoc, Inquirer Research

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TOYOTA
TOYOTA moving forward

Man suspected of shooting to death 3 men now in hiding

The names of the Arroyos have been debased

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

"EUREKA!" A WORD I HARDLY HEARD every day when I was a crime reporter, has been "degraded" by being included in the jargon of the rich and famous, albeit, corrupt government officials and hangers-on.

"Eureka!" is "pasosyal" word for Eduardo. In police argot, "pasosyal" means "under the protection of" as in "Batang si Congressman sa amin kaya di pwedeng hulihin" (He's a Congressman's child so no "pestering" [hassling] or being pestered by Congressmen as used as).

"Eureka!" has gotten a new meaning, now, it used to refer to "kickback."

Last June Miguel A. referred to by another JTE-NBN salesman Dante Mactinga as a member of "friendly Group plus, plus," allegedly used "eurekas" in his communications with Mactinga.

"Eurekas" was how much would be added in the JTE-NBN contract deal in order for the Comelec Commission, plus its hatchet commissioners or kickbacks, said Mactinga.

Mactinga has linked the First Couple to the alleged kickback gang.

The names of Gloria and Mike Arroyo have been debased to the extent of "Singapore ni Presidente at PE na JTE-NBN deal."

And I thought that nothing could lower the debasement of then President Estay when he was linked to jueteng, sometimes referred to as "caged lion" (bugaw's gambit).

* * *

I wouldn't be surprised if somebody brave and daring enough would claim that the President's husband Mike Arroyo is "kumpare" (protector) of some smuggler at the Subic Freeport, the South Harbor and the Manila International Container Port (MICP).

So kidding, Arroyo's name has been bandied about like a badge of honor by some smugglers in Pinoy-movie parlance.

I should know. The reason I had a falling out with my once favorite buddy is that he wouldn't believe in any adviser in existence like relationships or friendships with some smugglers.

It took Undersecretary Antonio Miller to expose Mike Arroyo's friendship or relationship with certain smugglers when he told President Gloria her husband was pressuring him to go easy on his anti-smuggling campaign.

* * *

I was in Cebu City over the weekend and everybody was talking about the morning incident who was killed by holdup men.

The entire city, no stranger to big crimes, was shocked over the killing.

It was probably the first heinous crime in the city since unidentified vigilantes started stalking and some of the city's criminal elements.

But the campaigns of the vigilantes, although very successful as it drove out criminals from the city, quickened practically to a halt when priests and human rights advocates denounced it.

Cebu City's vigilantes are a copycat of the feared Davao Death Squad (DDS) that has the support of the populace.

Would the killing of the jueteng stalker have taken place if the vigilantes ignored the denunciations of the religious and human rights advocates?

* * *

Quezon City tops all other places in Metro Manila in crime incidences.

Bank and resort holdups, burglary, murder and carjacking, or taking a car by force, are among the most common crimes in the city.

Why doesn't Quezon City adopt Davao City's highly successful experiment in dealing with crime?

By DJ Yap

FED UP WITH HIS NEIGHBORS who were allegedly loafing him, a 30-year-old man gunned down three men and wounded another during a shooting spree in Pasay City before midnight Tuesday.

John Paolo Garcia, who fled after the incident, is now the subject of a manhunt after he was linked to the death of Reynaldo de los Reyes, 22, Leroy Bragajan, 39, and Guillermo Bandino, 27, in a residential compound on Road IV, Hilhow II, police said.

John Makarome, 21, was hit in the left thigh and rushed to the hospital, said Senior Supt. Marieto Tabero, chief of the Pasay police.

Based on the investigation, Garcia walked up to the men while they were drinking beer inside the compound and reddenly shot them repeatedly using a .45-caliber pistol. Garcia escaped on a motorcycle with his two children, Tabero said.

A search of the suspect's house showed that it had been emptied, indicating that the killings might have been planned beforehand, the official said.

Investigators said Garcia had been causing a ginalpa against his neighbors who reportedly had fired up a week earlier.

Tabero said the suspect lodged a complaint with the Pasay police, but this only got him into more trouble with his neighbors, who allegedly threatened him with physical harm, among other forms of harassment.

METROBRIEFS

Cops looking for thief

THE PASIG City police are looking for a man who robbed three men of their cash and valuables Tuesday night. PCO Roger Salazar said Salvador Domingo Adolfo dropped a bicycle and robbed its two passengers and driver in Barangay Pinagbuhatan, Pasig City. The robbery victims were identified as Lorelie Bonanno, Jessie Estipon and driver Agustin Mendil. The police said Mendil was driving the tricycle on Dayuma Street in Barangay Pinagbuhatan when Adolfo, who was armed with a .38-caliber gun, suddenly appeared in front of the vehicle and ordered the victims to give their valuables to him. The three handed over a Motorola cell phone worth P10,000 and a Nokia cell phone worth P10,500 to the suspect. Mendil also gave his day's earning of P400 to Adolfo. The victims positively identified Adolfo as the suspect after seeing his picture in the police's rogue gallery.

Kristine L. Alave

Pacquiao fight to be aired live

BOXING champ Manny Pacquiao's rematch with Mexico's Juan Manuel Marquez will again be shown live on cable so-called television sets to be set up in six areas in Manila, one each for the city's six districts. Mayor Alfredo Lim said he had already asked city administrator Jesus Mel Macuse and parks and recreation bureau chief Dong Mercader to prepare for this live-via-satellite airing of "Unbreached Rivalries." The fight will be held on Saturday (by Pacific and Eastern Standard Time) evening in Las Vegas, Nevada or Sunday morning in Manila. Tickets will be given at the venue entrance on a first come, first serve basis. The areas where the fight would be aired live are the Ronda Sports Complex (District 1), Paltok playground (District 2), Ilaya playground (District 3), Tondo Sports Complex (District 4), San Andres Sports Complex (District 5) and Sampaloc Basketball Court (District 6).

Alexis M. Lopez

Mayor wants CCTVs in banks

IN A BID to thwart robberies, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. yesterday ordered a rigorous inspection and monitoring of closed-circuit television cameras placed inside banks, supermarkets and other commercial establishments in the city, in a statement, Belmonte said he would enlist Senior Supt. Magtanggol Sabbaluca, Quezon City Police District chief, and the city Business Permit and Licensing Office to check if commercial buildings are obeying the city ordinance requiring the installation of CCTVs in their premises. "Do not let our guard down anytime and deprive bank robbers of any opportunity to carry out their activities," Belmonte told officials.

Marlon Ramos

Top US commander for Mideast resigns

WASHINGTON—THE NAVY ADMIRAL in charge of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan announced he will resign following press reports portraying him as opposed to President George W. Bush's Iran policy.

Adm. William J. Fallon, one of the most experienced officers in the US military and the region's wars, said he had become a distraction hampering his efforts in the Middle East. Fallon's area of responsibility includes Iran and stretches from Central Asia across the Middle East to the Horn of Africa.

"I don't believe there have ever been any differences about the objectives of our policy in the Central Command area of responsibility," Fallon said, adding he regretted "the simple perception that there is." He was in Iraq when he made the announcement Saturday.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates told a Pentagon news conference that he accepted Fallon's request to resign and insisted there is no policy upswing that the Iran issue had become a distraction. Gates said repeatedly that he believed talk of Fallon opposing Bush on Iran was mistaken.

FALLON

"I don't think that there really were differences at all," Gates said, adding that Fallon was not pressured to leave.

"He told me that, quote, 'The current embarrassing situation, public perception of differences between my views and administration policy and the direction that comes from the content make this the right thing to do,' on quote," Gates told reporters.

Fallon was the subject of an article published last week in Esquire magazine that portrayed him as at odds with a presidential target to go to war with Iran. Titled "The Man Between: War and Peace," it described Fallon as a lone voice against taking military action to stop the Iranian nuclear program.

Gates said he did not think it was that article alone that prompted Fallon to quit. Further, Gates thought it was "a relatively brief period of time" that he said Fallon had failed to put "behind us."

It is highly unusual for a senior commander to resign in wartime. Fallon took the post on March 16, 2007, succeeding Army Gen. John Abizaid, who retired after nearly four years in the job. Fallon was part of a new team of senior officials, including Gates, chosen by Bush to implement a revised Iraq war policy.

Fallon's departure, effective March 31, is unlikely to have an immediate effect on conducting the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. His top deputy at Central Command, Army Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey, will take his place until replacement nominee is nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

Gen. David Petraeus, who runs the Iraq war from Baghdad but is technically subordinate to Fallon, was known to have differences with Fallon over the timing and pace of drawing down US troops from Iraq. Fallon has favored a faster pullback.

Petraeus issued a statement lauding Fallon's service. AP

Obama beats Clinton in Mississippi

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI—BARACK OBAMA trounced Hillary Clinton in Mississippi's Democratic primary, riding huge support from African Americans, as a many new race now stalled Clinton's White House bid.

The Illinois senator punched back with his second win in a row since the former first lady's campaign roaring wins in Texas and Ohio last week, which halted his streak 12-contest win streak and smoothed their epic struggle.

Even as Mississippi voted, the tone of the contest took another negative briefly, as the Obama camp demanded the resignation of Clinton supporter Geraldine Ferraro, who put Obama's stunning rise in big-time US politics down to his race.

With 61/33 nominating delegates, conservative, Deep South Mississippi, reliably Republican in general elections, was the last showdown in the Democratic race before the more republican Pennsylvania primary on April 22.

"We have had a terrific week, we have won Wyoming, we have won Mississippi," Obama told MSNBC after his victory, and topped Clinton over her 2002 Senate vote to authorize war in Iraq, a conflict he opposed.

In a statement, he said people in Mississippi joined "millions of Americans from every corner of the country who have chosen to turn the page on the failed politics of the past and embrace our movement for change." Mississippi did not change the race, but allowed Obama to pad his lead in the race for nominating delegates doled out after each state contest.

Clinton campaign manager Maggie Williams congratulated Obama and looked forward to Pennsylvania and beyond, but there was no direct comment from the candidate herself.

With 99 percent of precincts reporting in Mississippi, Obama had won 61 percent of the vote compared to 37 percent for Clinton.

Television exit polls showed a large racial divide: half of the Democratic electorate was African Americans, nine in 10 of whom went for Obama, according to MSNBC figures.

Fox News exit polls said white men voted for Clinton 69 to 30 percent, and white women by 54 percent to 28 percent.

According to a tally by RealClearPolitics.com, the Mississippi victory left Obama with 1,666 delegates compared to 1,444 for Clinton—both still well short of the 2,025 necessary to clinch the party's nomination.

The latest racially tinged row of an increasingly ugly campaign raged after former cold-a California newspaper: "If Obama were a white man, he would not be in this position." AFP

WORLDBRIEFS

China out of rights blacklist

WASHINGTON—The United States dropped China from its list of the world's worst human rights violators, but added Syria, Uzbekistan and Sudan to its top 10 offenders in an annual report released on Tuesday. Despite removing Beijing from its top blacklist, the State Department's 2007 Human Rights Report said China, which has visited human rights violations. The report said China, which has visited human rights violations, had a record of human rights violations in the Department's 2006 and 2005 reports. AFP

FBI arrests wanted US surgeon

PORTLAND—A US surgeon wanted in Australia on charges of manslaughter, negligence and fraud was arrested in Oregon on Tuesday, Jayant Patel, who could face life in prison in Australia, appeared before a US federal magistrate who set the doctor's extradition hearing for April 10. The FBI arrested Patel at his home in suburban Portland. Patel was charged in Australia with three counts of manslaughter after an inquiry in late 2005 linked him to the deaths of at least 13 patients and the harm of at least 21 others while he was working as a surgeon at the Bundaberg Base Hospital in Queensland state. Reuters

27 miners missing in China

BEIJING—At least 27 Chinese miners were missing in two separate accidents concealed by mine owners in northeastern Heilongjiang province, a state-run news agency reported Wednesday. The Xinhua News agency said 11 of the miners were missing after a cave-in at the Jiandao Coal Mine on Feb. 28 in Jixi city. The miners' manager initially reported that seven miners were trapped underground, but local authorities began investigations after residents reported more men had gone missing. In a separate accident at the Taiyuan Coal Mine in Hegang City, 43 men were trapped when the mine caught fire on March 5. Thirty were rescued but 15 miners remain missing. AP

Indian airport workers strike

NEW DELHI—Thousands of airport staff began an indefinite strike at 127 airports across India on Wednesday, but flights from India's main cities of Mumbai and New Delhi were unaffected, according to airport officials. About 14,000 union members are striking over the imminent takeover of two airports in the southern cities of Hyderabad and Bangalore, both home to many of India's software and outsourcing companies, to make way for new facilities. Strikers are mostly employed in airport support services, and include electricians, plumbers, cleaners, engineers and emergency fire support staff. Reuters

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Casino

44 killed in violence across Iraq

BAGHDAD—AT LEAST 44 PEOPLE WERE KILLED in violence across Iraq on Tuesday, including 16 in a bomb attack on a bus, as US and Iraqi officials began talks on the US military's future role in the country.

The day's bloodiest attack was on a bus traveling from the port of Basra to Nasiriyah when it was struck by a bomb, some 450 kilometers south of Baghdad, Nasiriyah police lt. Col. Ali Hussein said.

At least 16 people were killed and 22 wounded, he said.

Separately, eight people were killed when a suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden car into a checkpoint manned by Iraqi soldiers and members of a local group fighting al-Qaeda in Iraq, police said.

The attack took place in Dhuluiya, 70 km from the capital in Salahuddin province, at around 3:05 p.m., police Lt. Col. Muhammed Khalil said.

Around 80,000 Shiapis, mostly from Anbar, have allied with the US military by forming local Al-Sahwa, or Awakening, groups to fight al-Qaida.

The US military-backed groups have increasingly faced attacks from extremists.

Elsewhere, 18 people were killed in clashes between militants and security forces, including 14 in the central Shiite city of Kut and nine in the northern city of Mosul, security officials said.

In Basra a civilian was shot dead by gunmen, police said.

The latest violence came a day after insurgents killed eight US soldiers, making March the deadliest day for American forces in seven months.

Five were killed and three wounded in a suicide attack in Baghdad's once upscale neighborhood of Mansour the military said, while insurgents killed three more US troops and their interpreter in Diyala province, the theater of a joint US-Iraqi sweep of al-Qaida targets.

The latest violence being the US military's bloodiest toll since the March 2003 invasion is 3,983, according to an AFP tally based on independent website www.icasualties.org.

The mounting toll comes at a time when the military is reducing troop numbers amid claims that daily violence has fallen since August.

The military's losses in Iraq are one of the key issues in the US presidential election and have hit the campaign of President George W. Bush's Republican party.

Meanwhile, the foreign ministry announced the start of talks between US and Iraqi officials on the future of the US military presence in Iraq.

"The two parties started today in the ministry of foreign affairs, talks ... on agreements and arrangements for long term cooperation and friendship, including agreements on temporary US troop presence in Iraq," the ministry said.

The talks follow a November agreement between Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki setting a July 31 target date to formalize US-Iraq economic, political, and security relations.

At the time Maliki said the accord sets 2008 as the "final year" for US-led forces to operate in Iraq, under a UN mandate, which the new bilateral arrangement would replace.

The agreements will mark out the future role and numbers of US forces in Iraq in the aftermath of the November 2008 US presidential election, despite July Arab American public opposition to the war. AFP

Thaksin pleads not guilty to graft charges

BANGKOK—DEPOSED THAI Premier Thaksin Shinawatra pleaded not guilty on Wednesday to corruption charges, in the first case assembled by military-backed investigators to reach court.

Thaksin said little during the 20-minute hearing before the Supreme Court, which was packed with hundreds of his supporters who filled the courtroom and spilled out onto the steps outside.

After a judge read out the charges, accusing Thaksin of using his political influence to win his wife a concessory property deal, he was asked if he pleaded not guilty. Thaksin simply replied: "Yes." The court also said that Thaksin would not have to attend every hearing in his trial.

The billionaire had requested that the trial proceed in his absence so that he can travel overseas to see to his investments, particularly the English Premiere League club Manchester City, which he bought last year.

Thaksin has already been granted court permission to travel to Britain for a month, and is expected to leave Thailand later in the week.

Thaksin's arraignment came less than two weeks after his jubilant return to Thailand, ending nearly 18 months in self-imposed exile following the 2006 military-backed coup against him.

"Today we have denied all charges," his lawyer Pichai Chunhavachira told reporters.

"We are confident that we can answer all questions and defend against any accusations by the prosecutors," he said.

Pichai said Thaksin requested permission not to attend every hearing so that his travel plans would not hold up the case.

"Sometimes Thaksin will be busy and unable to attend the hearings. So we asked for the trial to begin in his absence so that the proceedings will not be held up," Pichai said.

Wearing a black suit with a white shirt, Thaksin did not speak to reporters as he left the court, but greeted the hundreds of supporters awaiting for him outside.

His son Pitchhaenan accompanied him to the 20-minute hearing. His wife Pojaman has already pleaded not guilty to the same case.

Thaksin and his wife each face up to 13 years in prison over four graft charges that they used their political influence to buy prime Bangkok property in 2003 from a government agency at about one third of its estimated value.

They have been unbeatable with no evidence in their defense by April 28, but no new hearing has been scheduled.

The land scandal is the only case investigated by a military-backed panel to go to trial.

The panel, known as the Assets Examination Committee (AEC), this week asked the Supreme Court to accept another case accusing Thaksin of wrongly legalizing an underground lottery. AFP

NY Governor Spitzer spent $80,000 on prostitution ring, say officials

ALBANY—WITH PRESSURE mounting on Gov. Eliot Spitzer to resign over a call-girl scandal, investigators said he was closely connected with agency that charged thousands of dollars—perhaps as much as $80,000—with the high-priced prostitution service over an extended period of time.

Spitzer and his family, meanwhile, remained secluded on Tuesday in the governor's mansion, while Republicans began talking impeachment, and few if any fellow Democrats came forward to defend him. A frantic search of notes began at the state Capitol, where whispers of "What have you heard?" echoed through nearly every hallway of the corridors, 100 years old building.

On Monday, when the scandal broke, prosecutors said in court papers that Spitzer had been caught on a wiretap spending $4,300 with the Emperors Club VIP call-girl service, with some of the money going to rent a night with a prostitute named Kristen, and the rest to be used as credit toward future trysts. The papers also suggested that Spitzer had done this before.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a law enforcement official said Tuesday that Spitzer, in fact, had spent tens of thousands of dollars with the Emperors Club. Another official said the amount could be as high as $80,000. But it was not clear over what period of time that was spent.

Still another law enforcement official said investigators found that during the tryst with Kristen on the night before Valentine's Day, Spitzer used two rooms at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington—one for himself, the other for the prostitute, fronting several $1,000 bills. Spitzer smuggled away from his security detail and made his way to the room where she was waiting, the official said. The three officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the case.

In the court papers, an Emperors Club employee was quoted as telling Kristen that Client 9—Spitzer, according to investigators—"would tell you to do things that ... you might not think were safe," and Kristen responded by saying: "I have a way of dealing with that ... I'd be, like, listen, dude, you really want this sex?"

A law enforcement official said Tuesday the discussion had to do with Spitzer's preference not to wear a condom and the call-girl's insistence that he use one.

Spitzer's vast personal wealth would have made it easy for him to spend thousands of dollars on prostitutes. The scion of a wealthy Manhattan real estate developer, Spitzer reported $1.9 million in income in the IRS in 2006.

On Tuesday, Albany insiders on Tuesday said the governor was still trying to decide how to proceed. Options included quitting immediately, or waiting to see if opposition to a fast-gaining impeach behind prosecutors in mid-indictment.

Democrats privately floated several other names, including The Associated Press that Spitzer was considering, what was almost unthinkable immediately after Monday's bombshell apology hanging on.

"If the public is fine, he'll stay," said a Democrat who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject.

Still, Spitzer's many enemies from Albany and Wall Street were emboldened, and some of his friends were from their cocoonings.

"Politically because of his own inept planfulness on which he was elected governor, his ability to govern the state of New York and execute his duties as governor have been irreparably damaged," said Gerson Exton, a good-government group that supported the crusading attorney general for governor in 2006 and provided critical support in his effort to reform Albany. AP

How technology has changed the world's oldest profession

NEW YORK—IT MAY BE THE world's oldest profession, but prostitution is using some 21st-century tricks.

The prostitution scandal involving New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer lays bare some of the latest technology-driven ways sex workers use messaging to clinch a client, electronic bread trailers, a website featuring video photos, prices and rankings.

There has always been a distinct line between indoor and street level prostitution, and advances in technology have increasingly separated the two, said Ronald Weitzer, author of "Sex for Sale: Prostitution, Pornography and the Sex Industry."

Sex only can promotions and escort services now run more often from businesses, but they can leverage word-of-mouth advertising in new ways to build their brands and troll for clients. Online tutorial comments and discussion the escort and sex workers industries can solidify customer loyalty.

"It's commercial, but it's also social, so people do really form relationships," says Anderson Ray, author of "Naked on the Internet: Hookups, Comedians, and Cashing in on Internet Sex Phenomena" and a former sex worker.

"Clients become buddies," she said.

There are a host of online message boards where clients or potential clients can discuss, rate and exchange information about individual women.

A recent rating of one woman on the escort review site www.bigdoggies.com reads: "She is the real deal. She's bright, funny, enthusiastic, beautiful. Her boss body really loves what she does."

Another woman got a bad review—not for her physical characteristics, but for her communication etiquette. "... I didn't receive calls or e-mails. Irresponsible."

Such sites are natural places for escorts or prostitutes to advertise, looking to their own websites, a technique many use to screen potential clients.

Technology also eases the business end of things, Weitzer says. While clients are surveying potential companions, escort services managers can look incognito at a background check or even a couple Google searches.

Payment is easier, too. AP

WHAT'S INSIDE
Bryant puts Lakers back on top
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Super-fit Pacquiao ready to go

Filipino hero sees no problem making 130 lb weight limit

By Ray Leaves

LAS VEGAS—THIS EARLY, MANNY PACQUIAO IS READY TO rumble.

With his weight in check, Pacquiao said he has strengthened his focus on grabbing the World Boxing Council super featherweight crown from Mexican Juan Manuel Marquez on March 15 at the Mandalay Bay Events in Casino.

"Ready to go," said Pacquiao on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila), after eating supper at his suite at the Mandalay Bay here.

"Labor na no (it's fight time)."

After shedding in at 133 pounds on Saturday, just three days over the limit, Pacquiao found no need to starve himself.

"Any setup here ng alam (The food is delicious)," said Pacquiao, who feasted on fried pompano and chicken tinola with a scoop of rice and lots of fruits.

Convinced by trainer Freddie Roach to watch his diet, Pacquiao said he'll begin to cut down on his food intake on Wednesday.

"Mag-umpisa pa naman ako (Any way I'm still starving)," said Pacquiao, who jogged at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas campus in the morning and then trained with Roach in the afternoon at the Wild gym.

He did six rounds with the mitts, shadow-boxed and completed exercise calisthenics.

First Asian to win 3 crowns

Pacquiao is aiming to become the first Asian to hold three world crowns.

Hailing his fight career at 10 years old and 106 pounds, Pacquiao bulked up and eventually won the World Boxing Council flyweight and International Boxing Federation super bantamweight titles.

He will continue his routine until Thursday, when he starts pushing up for the best dubbed "Unfinished Business."

The first Pacquiao-Marquez fight in 2004 ended in a majority draw after the Mexican survived three first-round knockdowns.

Assisting Pacquiao's grueling conquest of well-wishers on Tuesday was Rod Nazario, his former business manager whom he persuaded to fly here.

Bet of $230 to win $100

Meanwhile, bookmakers reported that Pacquiao remained a minus-230 favorite to beat Marquez, who was listed at plus-190. The odds means a $230 bet on Pacquiao would earn just $100 while a $100 wager on Marquez would return $190.

The only thing going for oddmakers is the rising stake on when betting odds like the fight ending in knockout. Put $1, every winning $100 bet stands to earn $175.

For those who do not want the boot to go the full route, they will get just $100 for every $175 wager.

While Pacquiao was a solid 2-1 favorite to knock out Marquez last week, the odds now stand at 8 to 5.

MANNY Pacquiao trains during a media workout and then signs autographs (above right) for fans in Las Vegas on Tuesday

More Pacquiao stories on A28

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Ave., Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION FOR THE AMENDMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARGE MADE FROM THE UNIVERSAL CHARGE FOR THE DECLARATION/REIMBURSEMENT OF PROVISIONAL APPROVAL, WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

ERC Case No. 2008-____

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Petitioner
x - - -

Bryant puts Lakers back on top of Western heap

LOS ANGELES—THE LAKERS HAVE worked their way back to the top of the Western Conference. They'll be hard-pressed to stay there in the coming days.

Kobe Bryant scored 33 of his 36 points in the final 6 and 1/2 minutes, Lamar Odom added 29 points and nine rebounds, and the Lakers beat the Toronto Raptors, 117-108, on Tuesday night for their 10th win in 11 games.

Next comes a rugged four-game road trip starting Friday night in New Orleans, with games at Houston, Dallas and Cleveland following.

The hosts teams have a cumulative record of 160-86 including 101-26 at home, and if the Raptors win games against Atlanta and Charlotte beforehand, they'll be shooting for their 22nd straight win against the Lakers on Sunday.

"It's going to be a tough one," Bryant said. "Those teams are good teams. In the East, you have a couple dynamic games. In the West, you don't get those."

Lakers coach Phil Jackson had a message for his players after their latest victory.

"I told them basically we aren't going to beat any of those teams if we play like we have played the last two or three games," he said.

Lakers forward Luke Walton said he's excited about the trip.

"It's time to have some fun and play some of the top teams in the NBA," he said. "There's going to be hostile environments, every possession is going to be crucial. That's a lot of fun for a player."

The Lakers went 31-of-32 from three-point range for season highs in both categories—a strange circumstance considering the Raptors aren't known for their interior defense.

"It's too many," Jackson said of the 32 attempts from beyond the arc. "This is a team, however, that we think you have to do more scoring to the paint than from the outside."

LOS Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant dunks during against the Toronto Raptors.

Bryant also had seven rebounds and seven assists for the Pacific Division leaders. Lakers (43-19), who lead the San Antonio Spurs by a half game in the Western Conference standings.

"We did an OK job defensively," Bryant said. "The first half is always an adjustment to get used to those type of teams the way they play. I think in the second half we did a much better job."

T.J. Ford scored all but four of his 28 points in the second half for the Raptors (29-29), who lost for the fifth time in seven games. Anthony Parker added 21 points, Bargnani 18 and Jose Calderon had 16 points and eight rebounds and Andrea Bargnani scored 15 for Toronto.

Raptors star Chris Bosh, averaging 22.8 points and 8.9 rebounds, missed his ninth straight game with a sore right knee.

Toronto has a 4-7 record without Bosh.

Wizards 105, Bucks 97

At Washington, Antawn Jamison scored 35 points, reside Nick Young had a career-high 22, and the Washington Wizards rallied in the fourth quarter to beat The Milwaukee Bucks.

The victory moved Washington, we got to 5-6 since early-season in the Eastern Conference, 11½ games ahead of slumping Philadelphia.

Michael Redd scored 26 points, Andrew Bogut had 15, and Charlie Villanueva had 14 points and matched a season high with 16 rebounds for the Bucks, who lost for the sixth time in seven games with another lackluster defensive performance.

Pacers 114, SuperSonics 107

At Indianapolis, Mike Dunleavy scored 22 points and Indiana snapped a three-game losing streak and sent Seattle to its fifth straight loss.

Danny Granger added 20 points, Troy Murphy had 19 points and nine rebounds and Travis Diener had 13 points and nine assists for the Pacers.

Kevin Durant scored 27 points and reserve Nick Collison added 15 points and eight rebounds for the Sonics.

Bulls 108, Jazz 96

At Chicago, Ivese Gordon tied a season high with 24 points, Ben Gordon added 18, and Chicago snapped Utah's five-game winning streak.

Gordon hit several key three-pointers, including two late in the third and one midway through the fourth after the Jazz pulled within 90. AP

NBA TODAY
Standouts
Rockets — San Antonio Spurs at Houston Rockets (cable) (8:30 p.m.)
Heat at Hawks (ABC)
7 p.m. — Cleveland Cavaliers at New Jersey Nets (cable) (8:30 p.m.)

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Standings	W	L	PCT	GB
Atlantic Division				
x-Boston	51	16	.761	—
Toronto	34	33	.507	17.5
Philadelphia	31	36	.463	20.5
New Jersey	30	36	.455	21.0
New York	19	46	.292	31.5
Central Division				
x-Detroit	49	21	.700	—
Cleveland	42	27	.609	6.5
Chicago	32	36	.471	16.5
Indiana	31	38	.449	18.0
Milwaukee	30	41	.423	20.5
Southeast Division				
Orlando	47	24	.662	—
Washington	33	37	.471	13.5
Miami	32	37	.464	14.0
Charlotte	26	43	.377	20.0
Atlanta	24	45	.348	22.0

WEST IN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division				
San Antonio	44	18	.710	—
Houston	43	19	.694	1.0
New Orleans	37	25	.597	7.0
Dallas	37	25	.597	7.0
Memphis	31	31	.500	13.0
Northwest Division				
Utah	42	21	.667	—
Denver	37	28	.569	5.5
Portland	34	31	.523	8.5
Seattle	31	32	.492	10.5
Minnesota	24	40	.375	18.0
Pacific Division				
LA Lakers	43	19	.694	—
Phoenix	42	22	.656	2.0
Golden State	34	30	.531	9.5
Sacramento	30	35	.462	14.0
LA Clippers	19	45	.297	25.0

x-clinched playoff spot y-division title z-clinched best record

Source: STATS

Deaf boxer makes Olympics

DEBRECEN, HUNGARY—A YOUNG HUNgarian boxer, who was born deaf, has against the odds booked his ticket to the coming Olympics.

Gergo Kovacs, 21, one of seven children born into a poor gypsy family from Debrecen, eastern Hungary, will compete along with Bernard(c) Iand in the flyweight category this summer.

Suffering from congenital deafness this is one of his family members. Kovacs did not learn to speak until the age of 10 that soon he pulled on his gloves as a child. his world changed as he overcame his first hurdle by winning his first awards shortly after entering the ring.

His mother Eliana and father Joseph are from a minority Romani size, is separate by professions, in economic which can make his mark on the world. AFP

PHILIPPINE CHAMPIONS Anthony Fernando and Mike Nieto (third and fourth from left, respectively) raise Jim Beam Cup after winning the Rizal-Manila National Pro-Am on Saturday at The Riviera Golf Club in Antipolo. With their teammates is Jim Beam's first-ever global ambassador Cecilia Lo'Cicero and Jolibee Carlos. Also shown are (from left) Dr. Fabio Bruni, Lilia Bautista and president Filiberto Bruni, organizing committee chair Dante Pisarra and Riviera president Jose Maria Fernandez.

Bantay Bata golf event set March 28

THE FIRST SHOWBAY BAHA GOLF TOURnament, aimed at generating funds for the needs of indigent children under the Bantay Bata 163 Foundation, will be held on March 28 at the Black Mark west course in Mandaluyong City.

The tournament will feature illustrious personalities and invited captains of the industry for a cause oriented festive golf event.

Bantay Bata 163 Foundation is headed by news personality Tina Monzon-Palma.

"We decided to stage the tournament because we believe in the generous nature and charitable traits of the Filipino people," said Al Tondo II Aquino, chair and president of the organizing Gemini Group of Companies.

"It is our hope that our friends and kind-hearted individuals out there will support us in this program," he added.

Registration is at 6 a.m. and tee-off time is 7:30 a.m.

Tournament winners will receive lucrative prizes while valuable items will be given away during the raffle that will coincide with the awarding ceremonies.

"It will be a day of fun and socials and we will make sure all the participants will end the day with smiles on their lips," added Aquino, who added that he wanted "to give something back to the needy, particularly the malnourished children."

Bantay Bata 163 is a child welfare program that not only rescues and rehabilitates sick and abused children, but also provides shelter, therapy and quality home care for rescued children until they can be reunited with their families or trained to prosper child-caring agencies.

The tournament is noted by invitation but interested applicants may still call 927.1111 (Marion Rosales) for more details.

A camaraderie unseen in today's PBA

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA—I FIRST noticed the chubby-eyed fellow at the San Francisco airport. He was with Abe King, chair of the PBA Legends Foundation. I had met the other Filipinos who were there to welcome the legends arriving from Manila.

He must be a big fan of the PBA, I thought. He looked like a PBA fanatic of the players, as if they were old-time friends.

Mario Taddeda, who has been based in Reno for 17 years and later works for LBC, was also there to welcome the homecoming legends. Now 69, Mario sported a different hairdo, that's why I did not recognize him. He had to introduce himself to me.

Saturday Lim and Johnny Abarrientos, the cut from friendly was complete. Sunday had to go under the knife some weeks before departure while Johnny had to attend to a business emergency back home. Nonetheless, The crowd here in California is that many PBA cagers who invested in the enterprise lost a considerable amount of money.

[illegible]

I left before when I learned during dinner at Gerry's Grill, Union City branch, that it wasn't only me who had failed to recognize the chubby-eyed fellow—Mr. Pinoy PBA expert Rolando Gardiner, who is now 52. Even his colleagues Doctor Cobin and Boots Alvarez, who even spoke to him, did not recognize him.

"Never I really changed that much!" Bubsy couldn't help but ask as we took in the chilly, piney air outside the restaurant.

As usual, I immediately recognized Anthony Jourdin, also 52, even if he had been gone from the Philippines for 21 years. In contrast, Bubsy left the country only three years ago.

Anthony works with United Airlines.

* * *

After feasting on a wild combination of Filipino food that included pansit malabon, pansit bihon, pansit canton, bulalo, pork and chicken adobo, fried lumpia, grilled chicken, grilled pork lumpia, palabok, shopsuey and sisig, the Legends prepared reminisce on the Greatest Rivalry Ever where they were billeted.

"I remember when I was here with the national team in 1974, after participating in the World Championships in Puerto Rico," Mariano Perez warned teammates. "Lets not share more in regard their and my teammate Yeyong Martirez bought 18 pairs in assorted colors. When he got home and had time to distribute the labels, they all read 'Made in Marikina.'"

Rene Achacoso, Yeyong's teammate in the 1971 Manila Olympics, also had an unwitting shoot fetching.

"Mariano always wears on sale at the Olympic Village and buying just had to buy [sic]," said Rene. "He didn't believe it when we told him that what he was buying were wrinkle clothes."

Incidentally, there are three Olympians on the 1984 Legends Grand Reunion Team: Sonny Jaworski ('68 Mexico Olympian), Ashwani and Baser ('72 Munich).

* * *

Manny Pacaro, who became the object of controversy in the '70s when his PBA salary soared to P6,000—the highest in then, was shocked to hear reports that he had been seen shopping on the pavement in Divisoria. He was also seen dining.

"When I could all that businesses talk have some Scotch! I have been working with the Bureau of Immigration in Manila as a special agent for five years now," said Manny, who had been characterized Roderick Balderian by Alvin Guiterrez of his buddies.

"Antonio Sanchez" declined to comment when I called him to confirm reports that he is now estranged from his heavy actress wife Daisy Romualdez.

* * *

Antonio Sanchez, the US-based ex-PBA cager started arriving from Los Angeles and from the East Coast: Abet Guidaben, Bernie Bilmea, Yeyo Villanueva, Ondie dela Cruz, Tim Cobeco, Glo Badolato, Bruno Bolden, Ricardo Brown, Tony Dispensillero, Elmer Lago, Jun Jaime, Django Sawat, Benny de la Rosa, Boy Sisneros, Jerome Cortes, Roger Francisco and, last but not least, the Living Legend himself Sonny Jaworski, who was accompanied by his wife Jocelyn and children.

The Jaworskis flew in from Los Angeles, while Sonny was bestowed a special reward by Mrs. JJ's not mistaken.

Finally, I have never seen the cagers so excited to see each other. Abe successfully blended three generations of PBA cagers—from the big 3 to Alvin Patrimonio to Jeffrey Cariaso—in still never-used left pour of places on the tour.

WBO champ Canoy to fight in May

RMC Canoy

WBO ORIENTAL FEATHER weight champion Eric Canoy is slated to return to action in May, bouncing with southdefense office a ninth-round technical knockout win over Panamanian Rapiro Monja last month in Zamboanga City.

Rep. Celso Pedrain, who is promoting Canoy along with Sammy Gello-oat, said he is confident his unbeaten ward will be more impressive in his next outing after taking more time to train.

Pedrain is set to depart for the United States today to be an ringside for the Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez rematch on March 30 in Las Vegas. He will be accompanied by Zamboanga's Jo Boy Sulicano and Red Red Jose.

WBO Asia Pacific chief Leon Panesuello, in a previous interview, had hinted that Canoy may end up fighting in one of the big cards in the United States, possibly in one of the Golden Boy Promotions used put up by boxing's living legend Oscar De La Hoya.

Panesuello added that should Thailand's Yodsak Jindaeng successfully wrest the WBO title from Steven Luevano in the weekend of April Fool's, Canoy will be compulsorily mandatory challenger, the Thai may be pitted against Canoy against Jindaeng sometime next year.

While in the United States, Pedrain will take a closer look at how boxing events are run, and how operations are managed among elite level fighters.

As an amateur, Canoy won a victory over Thailand's first Olympic gold medalist Somluck Kamsing. Inform-L. Lapuebla, contributor

SPORTS

'Pacquiao can't take my belt away'

By Roy Luarca

LAS VEGAS—JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ SLIDDED FROM THE BLACK stretched limousines clad in a sport jacket with his World Boxing Council super featherweight belt slung on his left shoulder.

According to Marquez, the title belt wasn't merely there for display. He said it symbolized his determination to keep the title he wrested from fellow Mexican Marco Antonio Barrera and defended against another countryman, Rocky Juarez, last September.

"I am hanging on to this belt and it's not going to be taken away from me," said Marquez in Spanish. "And if Manny (Pacquiao) tries to get it away, it will cost him a lot."

Marquez was awarded by fate as a rematch bout played lively nationalist music when he arrived at the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino on Tuesday.

About 30 minutes earlier, challenger Manny Pacquiao, who arrived in a gold-painted Jeep, entered the same tree-lining glass door for the arrival ceremony for their March 15 rematch (Manila time).

"I think the same way as Pacquiao," said Marquez as he signed autographs, posters and boxing gloves. "The people will watch a great fight and a win (fight) for my country and for my people."

Pacquiao, his goatee gone and wearing a white long-sleeved polo, also declared the rematch bout, to God, country and the Filipino people.

Aware of Pacquiao's reputation as destroyer of top Mexican boxers, including Barrera and Erik Morales, Marquez said he trained long and hard to be in the best shape possible.

"I just think it is going to be a tough fight and I don't know whether I will win by knockout or decision," he said. "Manny said he trained hard for this fight because he is fighting me and so did I."

The entrances and exit of the protagonists for the WBC crown and the long coveted Ring Magazine title at the hotel took just over an hour.

Meanwhile, ticket sales for the mega bout have remained brisk.

Tickets costing $500, $600, $800 and $1,000 were all gone, with only a few $400 and $300 tickets still available.

[L&M] Manuel Pacquiao sings with a mariachi band as he arrives at the Mandalay Bay Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas on Tuesday. AP

Taskmaster Beristain takes charge

BERISTAIN

LAS VEGAS—A world boxing champion being fussed around like a little girl?

That's exactly what legendary Mexican trainer Ignacio "Nacho" Beristain intends to do for Juan Manuel Marquez in the last few days leading to his March 15 rematch with Manny Pacquiao for the World Boxing Council super featherweight crown.

"Because this is the second week, I am going to take care of him (Marquez) like a little girl," said Beristain, who directed the career of Marquez, his younger brother Rafael and 14 other Mexican titlists.

"Any more, any little detail about his whereabouts would be duly noted," said Beristain through an interpreter. "His weight would be duly monitored."

Others who had gone through Beristain's grueling training regimen at his Romanico Gym in Mexico City include four-time world champion Daniel Zaragoza, Shinichi "Finito" Lopez and Gilberto Roman.

Beristain, a boxing Hall of Famer in his native, is known for his unobtrusive style of training his fighters.

After watching rigorously every day from his ringside vantage point, he goes his separate ways to virtual seclusion, confining them to the hotel room as much as possible.

The 34-year-old Marquez is faceless with Beristain's style, having trained under him since he was a young boy.

And it must be very effective as Marquez has claims to Cinco Pilitos mitten—Bernardo Jarrell in 2000; Jesley Lorenzo Jr. (2002); and Jimrex Jaca (2004).

According to Beristain, he respects American Cruiser Freddie Roach, who will be training Pacquiao's corner.

"He's good and intelligent," said Beristain, who grew up in an orphanage and started boxing as an outlet to get back at those who bullied him.

Beristain, noting both fighters' preparations, predicted a good fight with Marquez eventually prevailing.

Sacred Heart five tops CTS tilt

CUBICUTS—SACRED HEART SCHOOL displayed poise in the clutch to down University of San Carlos-North, 20-17, and capture the Maestro title of the 2008 Cheerlet Tinapkin Unigad basketball tournament at the Don Bosco Cebu gym.

Arnstar Steeds finished down a seven-man roster tournament Gary Va and Jim Cairos contributed six and five markers, respectively, as Sacred Heart, coached by Eric Bonio, won the Tanghad Sugad trophy for boys aged 11-under.

Lance Chad topscored with nine while Arnold dominion had six for USC.

In the semifinal round, Va's scorching 15 points bucked the LCU-backed Timcot Estate Basketball Group, 29-17, and viewed Sacred Heart into the championship showdown with USC-North, which drew a bye.

Jose Medy Midoffe Sojo together with organizer Bernard Cleanpo awarded the trophies and medals to the winners in the hooplon supported by Jollibee.

Pasga seniors boost Corporate Cup title repeat bid

RACERS—DEFENDING 7 HOTSHOTS CHAMPION Philippine Amateur Senior Golf Association (Pasga) boosted its bid for a second straight crown with a big-high 317 points and a 102 total with one round left in the 20th Corporate Cup at the Camp John Hay Golf Club course this

Reigning national seniors champion Igay Clavecilla again amassed 37 points under the Modern scoring system while Jun Bellanca, who did not count on the first day, carded a 51 this time and Bible Soon added 49.

"We're glad we improved today," said Clavecilla. "Our score (302) seems formidable and we are hoping to keep the title."

But Pasga's fate still hangs in the balance with two hotin squads—GM Dev Co Seniors (268) and GEMOC Seniors (252)—playing their final round Thursday.

Meanwhile, Zamboanga II compiled 145 points for 289 to enter a 50-point spread over Alvarez 39 (231-239) in the Group I division.

Enon Water led Zamboanga II with 51 points while Joseph Ty added 46 and Derrick Lee 45 in the four-to-play three-to-count format.

Interbuilt posted a 165 for 289 points and extended its lead to 22 over Columbia Doctors Hospitals (135-264) in the Group II competition.

A five-day Baja-Mexico cruise courtesy of Royal Caribbean International and Baron Travel Corp. and the Texas Eagle golf cart from Turf Company are at stake for hole in one feats.

Tournament sponsors: GOLDSTAR, White Rock, Globe G, Citi Hotel, Cebu Pacific Air, Lucky Strike, Manila Bay Resort & Casino, Las Casas de Acuzar, Pt. La Del Sabinsoc, Japan Inter Link Group, Coca-Cola, Bonifacio Global City, Intramuros Golf Club, Manila Golf & Country Club, Wack Wack Golf & Country Club, Valley Golf & Country Club, Alabang Country Club, Mimosa Golf & Country Club, Riviera Golf & Country Club, Orchard Golf & Country Club, Forest Hills Golf & Country Club, Camp John Hay Golf Club, Subic Bay Golf & Country Club, Eagle Ridge Golf & Country Club, Canlubang Golf & Country Club, Southwoods Golf & Country Club, Tagaytay Highlands Golf & Country Club, Sta. Elena Golf & Country Club, Puerto Azul Golf & Country Club, Apo Golf & Country Club, Lakeside Golf & Country Club, Pradera Verde Golf & Country Club, Pasonanca Golf & Country Club, Negros Occidental Golf & Country Club, Bacolod Golf & Country Club, Iloilo Golf & Country Club, Tacloban Golf & Country Club, Leyte Golf & Country Club, Cebu Golf & Country Club, Mactan Island Golf & Country Club, Dumaguete Golf & Country Club, Davao Golf & Country Club, Davao Insular Golf & Country Club, Davao Golf & Country Club, Davao Golf & Country Club, Davao

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Your car's got a long, long way

Gov't debt burden eases to ₱3.71T

Foreign currency liabilities down 11% on strong peso

By Michelle V. Rama

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S DEBT BURDEN FELL TO P3.71 trillion as of end-December following the appreciation of the peso and moves to settle more maturing liabilities.

The outstanding debt was 3.6 percent lower than the P3.85 trillion in end-December 2006.

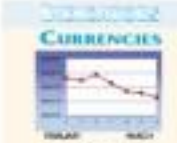
The government's debt burden was equivalent to about 56.6 percent of the country's gross domestic product in 2007, marking an improvement from the 62.8 percent in 2006.

If the lowest debt figure were divided among the country's projected population of 88.7 million Filipinos this year, each would have a share of P41,848, easing slightly from P42,289 in November.

The Bureau of the Treasury said in a statement that P3.2 trillion of the outstanding debt as of December 2007 was denominated in peso while the remaining P1.51 trillion was accounted for by foreign currency-denominated debts.

(January debt was up 2.1 percent from P3.13 trillion trillion in December 2006, but

GOV'T/A4



(For more market reports see Page B2)

Stocks close 1.5% higher

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 1.5 PERCENT higher yesterday after strong gains overnight on Wall Street where moves to beef up liquidity in the financial system were announced, dealers said.

They said the US rally came after the Federal Reserve teamed up with other central banks to inject liquidity into troubled financial institutions.

The composite index was up 44.38 points at 2,963.50 off a high of 3,004.71. The broader all-share index gained 22.32 points at 1,901.57.

Peseso improved slightly, with

STOCKS B2

RP qualifies for bigger grant from US agency

AFTER THE PHILIPPINE GOVernment presented the congress it claimed to have accomplished to curb corruption and improve public governance, the US government's Millennium Challenge Corp. announced that the country has qualified for a higher amount of financial assistance.

An "absolutely thrilled" President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said her government's efforts to fight corruption and provide good governance had been validated by the move of MCC to select the Philippines as eligible in applying for its large-scale grant funding.

"MCC, an official US government corporation designed to help developing countries fight poverty, announced that the Philippines has been eligible for MCC compact—an opportunity that can bring hundreds of millions of dollars for our nation to lift our nation out of poverty," President Arroyo said in a statement.

The MCC's board of directors said the Philippines was now eligible for a grant under the "compact" category and graduated from the "threshold" category.

"The MCC Board scored the

RP QUALIFIES B2

IN THIS ISSUE

■ Agri sector set to get P2.8B more, Yap says /B2
■ DOT entices photo enthusiasts to RP/B7

Filipinos still holding on to weakening dollar

By Doris C. Dumlao

FILIPINOS CONTINUE TO HOLD on to their dollars—whether for future requirements or long-term investments—despite the sharp erosion of the greenback's purchasing power, documents from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas suggested.

The deposit liabilities of the banking system's foreign currency deposit units (FCDUs) rose by 5.8 percent to $18.85 billion in end-January from $17.82 billion a year ago, the BSP reported yesterday.

An FCDU is a unit of a local bank or of a local branch of a foreign bank authorized by the BSP to engage in foreign exchange-denominated transactions such as accepting foreign currency deposits and granting of foreign currency loans.

The FCDU system's deposit liabilities—such as those placed by overseas Filipinos and their families, exporters or multina-

PAUPERIZE B5

Marketing costs hit 4th quarter income of Pepsi

By Dustin L. Lucas

PUBLICLY LISTED PEPSI-COLA PRODUCTS Philippines Inc. yesterday reported lower earnings for the fourth quarter of last year as the traditional cola market remained weak despite increased marketing efforts by the firm.

In its financial statements submitted to the Philippine Stock Exchange, the country's second-biggest beverage bottler and distributor said that its unaudited net income for the fourth quarter of 2007 stood at P143.4 million.

This was a 21 percent drop from the P181.3 million it reported for the same period of the previous year.

The lower earnings came even as the company reported that overall sales rose 5 percent during the fourth quarter of 2007.

"Revenue growth was driven by non-carbonated beverage revenues (which was up 34 percent) while carbonated soft drinks remained broadly flat," Pepsi's chief financial officer Partha Chakrabarti said.

Pepsi's financial statements showed that while it sold more products during the fourth quarter, this was offset by a 319-percent increase in marketing expenses, which rose to P232.2 million from only P56.9 million in the same period of 2006.

The company described the marketing expenses as "expenditure-time marketing investment made during the period [of] October-December 2007, the benefits of which are likely to be felt at a future period."

Pepsi's renewed marketing push is in line with similar efforts of its biggest rival Coca-Cola Bottlers Philippines Inc., which has boosted its marketing spending ever since the first was reassigned by its US-based parent three last year.

The company's lower earnings meant that its earnings per share at the end of the period declined to 4 centavos a share from the 5 centavos reported in 2006—a factor that is unlikely to help the company's languishing share price on the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Chakrabarti said, however, that gross profit margin for the period rose to 32.6 percent, representing a 1.8-percentage-point increase over the previous year's level.

Net profit down 21% to P143M

San Miguel Brewery to list on April 22

SOUTHEAST ASIAN FOOD GIant San Miguel Corp. said yesterday it would list its domestic beer unit on April 22 in what would be a second initial public offering for the Philippines.

Earlier, San Miguel said it had set the price range for the listing of San Miguel Brewery in PhP28.40 a share from an earlier range of PhP20.95-PhP.30 a share, coming maneuvers proceeds to around P22.82 billion from around P25.22 billion. Reuters

Canon sees ₱3-B revenue in '08

By Rita T. Olcenedo

CANON MARKETING (PHILIPPINES) Inc. expects surging camera sales to push its revenue to P3 billion in 2008 from P2.4 billion in 2007, its chief executive said.

Net income is expected to grow to P1.26 million in 2008 from more than P66 million in 2007, company president and CEO Ramon Ignacio told reporters at the Canon Imagination Summit 2008 Expo at the Greenhills Shopping Center.

"For January and February sales for 2008 were 30-percent higher than the same months in 2007 so things are looking good," he said.

The company sees growth driven by high-megapixel cameras with image stability and printer zoom features, followed by camcorders and printers. The company is embarking on an aggressive advertising and promotions campaign by linking with Da Blue of Wicked and Bong Garci, Boy Bastardo and Shaniwaah.

"We would really like to drive printer growth this year. We want to encourage people to print pictures again and store them in albums and scrapbooks," Arnolfo said.

The company has timed its product launch just ahead of the summer vacation, when it expects camera use to surge. The company launched the digital cameras (Powershot A470, PowerShot A580, PowerShot A990 IS and IXUS 80 IS), mini-DV camcorders (HF 200, HF10), DVD camcorders (HC 210, HC 3203), laser beam printers (Laser Shot LBP 3310, Laser Shot LBP 3370), multimedia projectors (XEED SX7, XEED4LCOS, LV-7365, SV-7385 LCD projector), and the highly anticipated EOS 450D digital SLR.

Agri sector set to get P2.8B more, Yap says

'Cross commodity' program

By Aisa N. Batino

THE AGRICULTURE sector is set to receive an additional budget of roughly P2.80 billion from the national government to fund a proposed "cross commodity food expansion program" poised at ensuring the country's food security.

"We have to build this expansion program to prepare for a cross commodity pressure that we may experience when the demand for rice continues the way it is," Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said yesterday on the sidelines of a rice food consultation with farm stakeholders.

Given the price spikes of other commodities such as wheat and corn, Yap explained that the Department of Agriculture expects Filipinos to consume more rice, in place of bread and pan de sal or corn, for example.

Yap disclosed that the National Food Authority council had already given its management the authority to import up to 2.1 million metric tons, up from the original 1.4 million MT.

"We are going to pump in rice in the country's stockpile to meet the demand gap and not for the purpose of decreasing the price," Yap said. "Our priority is not price, but the availability of rice. The market mechanism will take care of price."

Yap said President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo had approved on Wednesday this "supplemental budget," which will be on top of the regular budget allocated for the DA, worth P56.71 billion.

He noted that the bulk of the augmentation budget or about P1.5 billion will go to the rice program, through its 50-50 seed subsidy program, covering a combined 1.15 million hectares of rice lands.

The corn sector will also receive a P329-million support for the expansion of some 75,000 hectares for yellow corn- and/or manufacturer food- and 100,000 hectares for white corn.

Another P110 million will be used to increase spending for swine disease identification and eradication, of which P66 million will be used for a remodeling program, P26 million for feeds assistance; and P18 million for a vaccination program.

"We need to increase assistance for swine farmers since we go over or even more, are backyard raisers. With the high cost of feeds, they unwillingly," he noted.

Yap said the DA has also asked for an additional P58 million to increase production of root crops such as yam and sweet potato, while another P366 million will be used to produce an additional 220,000 metric tons of vegetables.

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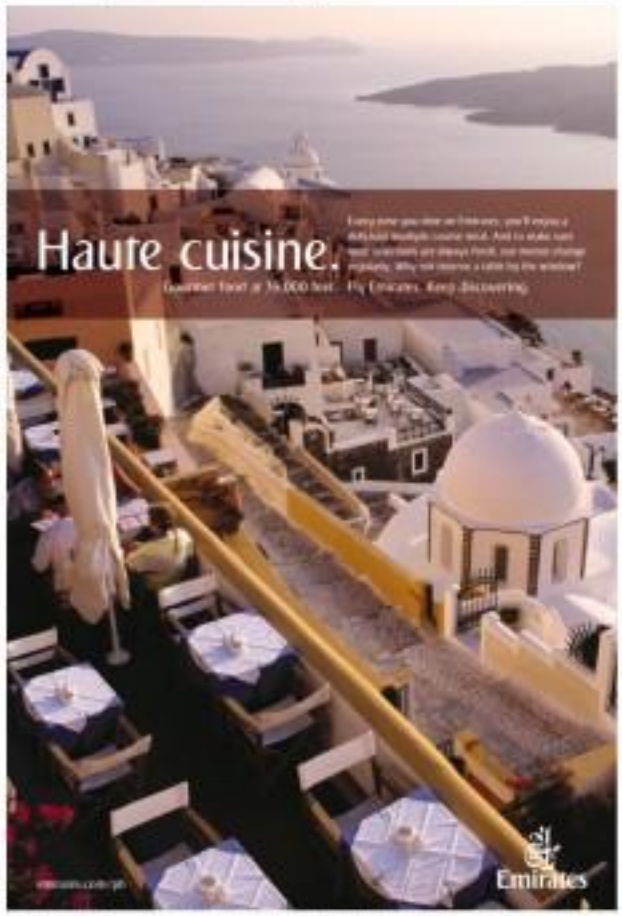

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People, Events & Products

Editor Arlen Espinosa

Helping moms make ends meet

MOMS ARE TRULY THE BEST WORD in a menu in eating for the whole family. It's well being. She's the best friend and confidant, the great advisor and listener, the patient teacher and study partner, role model, the chief who knows all our favorite dishes by heart, the instant driver and doer, snack, trainer, fan and cheerleader, name it, she's everything!

Mothers desire just the family's well-hate above everything else even if it means she's needed, their own dreams. Because of their rare gift of unconditional giving, moms are also known as the family's perennial "worker" – anyone does anything and everything that concerns the family.

Being the designated financial planners, moms are worried about keeping the home in ripop shape. Gifted with the ability to keep everything in proper order, from the basic cleaning routine, to the daily meals, down to the children's homework, if there is one thing that gives them sleepless nights, it's the challenge of balancing the family budget.

Moms usually worry about making ends meet especially when managing the monthly bills, maintain expenses, and vacation fees, topped with the pressure of setting aside cash for emergencies.

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All entries including those who only qualify for monthly draws are still qualified for the succeeding monthly and grand draws. There are 5 monthly drawer giving away P1 million each prize for each month and the grand raffle draw on Aug. 1 for P1 million.

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For more details, moms may call the PHILBank customer hotline at 845-8000 or visit www.philbank.com.ph.

BY KRISSING KALUGDUGAN

The Toyota Motor Philippines Foundation (TMPF), in cooperation with the Technical-Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Philippine Labor Management Council (TMP-LMC), the Employers Confederation of Philippines (ECOP), the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) and the Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. Labor Organization (TMPCLO), recently conducted a de-scooning activity for Grades 1 to 3 students and an annual physical examination for teachers and staff of the Lourdes Elementary School in Santa Rosa City, Laguna. The healthcare services are part of the foundation's continuing support to the adopted school. Students are TMP-LMC Chairman Yutaka Hasegawa and TMP-CLO president Wilson Lorenzo assisting in the de-scooning program.

Durano to lead government, private sector in opening job fair in Cebu

TOURISM SECRETARY JOSEPH ACE DURANO will lead government officials and over a hundred employers in holding off the "Trabaho sa Turismo" fair at the SM Mall here this morning (Thursday, March 13).

Arriving to a warm welcome by students from the Mandaue School of Performing Arts and choreography of jobseekers and industry leaders from Cebu and other parts of the Visayas, Durano will officially open the fair and tour the exhibits of the employers, all engaged in tourism-related businesses.

Durano will also meet with the media to give an update on the country's booming tourism industry, particularly on developments in the Visayas region and Cebu in the Visayas, which has been benefiting from the phenomenal yearly increases in foreign arrivals.

This developed since Durano assumed office as tourism secretary, making the country's experience consistent and unprecedented growth in tourist arrivals, posting foreign arrivals of 2.35 million in 2004, 2.62 million in 2005, 2.84 million in 2006, and 3.09 million in 2007.

The growth, which brought in some $4.897 billion in travel receipts, also raised the total number of direct employment in tourism to 5.7% of the country's total employment, or 2.1 million, the country's 16-year high economic growth of 7.3 percent last year.

The immense jobs generated by tourism were provided by airlines, shipping and cruise companies, hotels and resorts, restaurants, travel agencies and tour operators, convention and exhibition centers and organizers, spa establishments, entertainment firms, golf clubs, department stores and malls, call centers and business process outsourcing centers, tourism suppliers, banks, schools, national government offices, and retail and entertainment facilities, among others.

"These companies are joining our first Trabaho sa Turismo fair to beef up their ranks and enhance their manpower capacity and capability to meet the demands of their expanding members. And the best is yet to come," Durano said, expressing great optimism about the forum marked by the DOT's ambitious target of 3.5 million foreign arrivals for 2008 and upper 5 million by 2010.

Corporate participants in the fair include the Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Cebu City Marriott Hotel, Abaca Beach Resort, Asian Coconut Corp., Pescadera Pte. Ltd., Grand Hope Travel, Information Computer Institute, Magsaysay Maritime Corp, Manila Polo Club Cebu, Mepanbio Springs, The Spa at Plantation Bay, Mobile Products, Multi Home Corp, SM Dept Store, Inst Miguel Foods Inc, People Shoppers, Waterfront Air Travel, Hotel Supply Cebu, Whitehill-Intl Cebu City Hotel, and many others.

Supported by ABS-CBN and Manila Bulletin as media partners, the fair has been conveniently providing employment opportunities to jobseekers since 2006 by creating a one-stop venue for the matching of applicants' qualifications with the industry's varied skills requirements. This year's fair is also supported by GoJobStore and Double Bonanza as sponsors.

Job applicants register online at www.trabahosapilipinas.ph and get interviewed during the fair. They can also update their credentials online even after the fair so employers regularly check out the website for qualified applicants as new jobs are created anytime of the year.

Sports events to usher in the silver anniversary of Sportshouse

ALL EYES ARE SET ON A GRAND show showcase of sports events to usher in this year's much anticipated 25th anniversary celebration of Sportshouse, the country's pioneer in the sports retail business.

Embracing its tagline All the passion you play, Sportshouse has lined up a series of sports events dubbed as "Sportshouse Sportacle 2008" highlighting activities such as basketball Shootout, Table Tennis Tournament, Cheerdance Competition, Corporate Cup Badminton, Footbag Tournament, Fun Bandit, Tae Kwon Do Competition, High School Badminton Tournament, among others. This big event will be held in some of the biggest malls in the country and will be participated in by more than 1,000 participants from over 75 branch nationwide.

"We believe that we have become what we are today because of the overwhelming support of our clients," shares Sportshouse president and CEO Mark C. Chua. "As always, we want to continue bringing life into sports and sports into people's lives through sporting events and fun games. Our silver anniversary celebration promises to be a spectacular sporting experience everyone will surely love to be a part of."

Once inside any Sportshouse, one lives on the forefront of bringing sports into the lives of many people through an array of quality sports products and services catering famous sports brands such as Converse, Dunlop, Adidas, Asics, Mizuno, Prince, Wilson, Rebook, and Fortune. It has even closed to strengthen the "spirit of healthy lifestyle" by providing people from all walks of live the opportunity to experience worldwide sporting events.

The company traces its origin on June 1983 when it then under opened shop, Hillmark Aviation starting a new shopping habit for consumers from the traditional specialty shops and typical mom stores selling only "some" sporting goods to a one-stop shopping experience. The innovative concept brought about the birth of a sports outlet where the things one needs in "All the games you play" can be found conveniently under one roof.

Sportshouse has never been the same since then having phenomenal growth in sales and profitability as its small was opened - even responding its operations to Visayas and Mindanao with the opening in the Sportshouse in Cebu in 1994. And the rest, as they say, is history.

From its humble beginnings more than two decades ago, Sportshouse has come a long way even gaining prominence among the athletes and sports hobbyists for its wide assortment of quality, affordable, value-for-money products and excellent customer service. What more than 30 branches nationwide, Sportshouse has continued to keep its market leadership by continuously innovating its approach to provide the best of what consumers need in all the games they play!

OUTSTANDING UST ALUMNUS

Business tycoon Louie C. Sec (third from left) receives the St. Albertus the Great Award from (left to right) Rev. Fr. Rolando de la Rosa, OP, UST rector magnificus; Fr. Timoteo Peñalosa, OP, UST vice rector for religious affairs; and Fr. Rolando Dy, OP, UST vice rector for academic affairs during the University of Sto. Tomas' Araullo Alumni Association (UST-ARAA). Sec, who established the Doctor of Economics degree program at UST in 2002, was cited for his economic and social achievements and for embodying the Dominican core values of commitment, compassion, truth and competence. Also in photo are (fourth to seventh from left) Regina A. Lopez, president UST-ARAA; guidance school dean Dr. Lilian Bonoc; and UST vice rector Rosy Dan. Fr. Clarence Victor Marquez.

FCC SCORES AMVS AWARD

NetCircle Communications Inc (FCC), one of the country's leading telecommunications firm, recently bagged another award to attest for its excellent promotion of Filipino fashion to showcase through the online trade, book 113 hotels for Baby, a Chronicle of Filipino Innovators at the 42nd Annual Awards, a prestigious event of the Philippine Quality Awards (PQA) Foundation, Inc. The online trade book project provides the photographic records of the Filipino business innovators who pushed an impressive 112 point, 94 other recognized Filipino hotel during this 23rd Silver Jubilee. The 42nd Annual Awards, organized by the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP), acknowledges outstanding PR programs and individuals effectively put forth an organization's goals and objectives to its publics. Accepting the award are (l-r) FCC Mikey De Guzman (second from right) and Jane Sobrevilla (chief of staff of the First Gentleman, Arroyo Administration) and PRSP vice president (second from left) Kevin PRSP past president Ferdie Regalado (PR consultant) and Lilybeth Asuncion and Sonny Coloso, chair and CEO of Relationship Management Consultants and member of the Board of Governors (extreme left and right respectively).

Bank of Makati launches new products

BANK OF MAKATI (A RURAL BANK) INC. HAS BEEN AWARDED MACTAN INTERNATIONAL for its position as the country's biggest tourist hub - bigger than most savings banks, with a total assets of over P9 billion and a capital of P1.5 billion with the launching of two products in Mandaue. In addition to investment and deposit products with higher interest rates of 2 percent per annum on Time and Special Savings Deposits; insurance loans for small and medium enterprises, housing loans, contractors salary financing facility for home developers and microfinance loans, it now also offers personal loans and salary loans to individuals and qualified employees of accredited companies. With the introduction of the new products, BOM clients will now enjoy not only higher interest rates on deposit investments, help entrepreneurs expand, invest in business opportunities but also provides solutions for personal needs like buying a car, home improvement, and many more. Bank officials said the products will be available at any of our BOM branches located in Makati, Antipolo, Cavite, Cebuano, Dasmariñas, Cebu, Dagupan, Davao, Iloilo, Zapote, Ligao, Malolos, Naga, San Pablo, Tarlac, Tuguegarao and Virgin. Bank of Makati customers enjoy longer banking hours from 8:a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays to Fridays and 8 a.m. to 12noon Saturdays.

Purchasing, supply management course at St. Benilde

THE DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY-COLLEGE OF ST. BENILDE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL and Continuing Education (SPACE) is set to conduct a post graduate academic course on purchasing and supply management. The purchasing and supply management courses designed to teach students and professionals effective logistics management and strategies on how to enhance a company's competitive advantage. Participants can expect to strengthen their competencies to the practice of purchasing and supply management and acquire the knowledge from seasoned industry experts. A joint project of DPaCF and the Philippine Institute of Supply Management (PISM), the purchasing and supply management course is composed of six modules, which can be completed in a year. The modules will be conducted in four sessions every Saturday at 12:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. beginning March 29. The upcoming module is about purchasing functions and processes. Participants interested in the purchasing and supply management course and other programs at SPACE may call the College of St. Benilde at 405-5825, e-mail space@csb.edu.ph, or visit the SPACE website at www.csb.edu.ph/space. SPACE is located at the College of St. Benilde, Room 1308 School of Design and Arts Campus, 950 P. Ocampo Street, Manila.

15th National Furniture, Furnishing Fashion Festival

THE 15TH NATIONAL FURNITURE AND FURNISHING SALE OPENED TODAY NATIONAL FURNITURE, Furnishing Fashion Festival to be held back to back with the 8th Philippine Folk Arts and Crafts Fair from March 14 to April 13 at the Greenhills Shopping Complex in Ilaya. The 28-day show is a project of Philippine Asia Furniture and Commodities Organizers (Philcoa), a top trade fair and exposition center organizer. The Ilaya Fair is ideal for small-time entrepreneurs from Metro Manila and the provinces where exhibitors will offer high quality products and goods at very low prices. The small-time entrepreneurs can grab the opportunity to buy several items they can resell to their own communities. There are no incoming trade fairs organized by Philcoa in small entrepreneurs must visit.

Webfocus takes the lead in web development

THE WORLD WIDE WEB IS THE NEW MARKETPLACE TODAY. COMPANIES NAMETAKE a bigger market share should not be confined to a one bar get anywhere the diversity can. Thus, it is now imperative for companies to have their own websites. For this years, Webfocus Solutions Inc has been helping companies establish their presence on the Internet with its website development services. Ryan S. Yu, president and chief executive officer of Webfocus, said Webfocus, on the same together, have a very specific thrust. He says, We want to be the leading web development company in the Philippines that offers complete solutions to business enterprises based on the specific needs of a client, both those future and present needs while excelling in giving personalized service and customer support." In its early years, Webfocus developed websites on a menu basis, but soon changed last, seeing that each client has a unique need. "Customizing each project takes time. For example, client needs a customer applications or their websites, this just websites that can "detect sales." For sure, That has been the key to Webfocus's tremendous growth. In 2004-2005 alone, the company tripled its customer base and remains the choice of discerning clients. Power bag to ballast. Webfocus now has its expertise extended all over its principal are the most value for money and it has properly trained staff. "We need a cheap but inferior clients we what we can provide them. It's really getting the most bang with high quality service. We also make it look tough good people and not waste them," adds Yu. A website professional starts from securing the domain name, then designing an outline that is important to them, to create the website master plan, and finally the plan is turned over to the graphics designers. "We're able to do that because we have company. We use two most disciplinary people," Yu says. The website master offers professional solutions so that Webfocus is ready and just selling products but providing solutions to clients. Webfocus's has almost a thousand clients including, International Container Terminal Services Inc, which once won the best website in the web awards, Rouge Noir Jeans, Promax, Hotels Kalinaan, Hotels San Pablo, the Department of Budget and Management, City of Manila, City of Mandaluyong, National Railway and Transport Institute, and Philippine Retailers Association.

Karat World's 3-day mall outlets sale

KARAT WORLD, ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S LEADING JEWELRY STORE CHAINS, welcomes summer with a three-day sale from March 14 to 16 at several of its mall outlets. Participating Karat World branches are those in Robinsons Galleria, Robinsons Place Manila, Robinsons Metro East, Robinsons Place Bacolod, Robinsons Place Iloilo, and SM City Iloilo. "In appreciation of our customers' loyal patronage, we'll be offering 50 percent discount on all diamond and gold jewelry," Felix S. Sueno, its III, managing partner of Karat World, said. Installment plans of up to 12 months easy at zero interest are available. Karat World has a wide offering of charms, earrings, necklaces, pendants, bracelets, wedding and engagement rings. For those who want to check out Karat World's jewelry line, visit www.karatworld.net.

S&R launches members' treat sale

S&R SHOPPERS ARE EXPECTED TO THRONG IN DROVES AT S&R BUFFETS WHEN THE only remaining warehouse club membership store chain in the country launches its members' treat sale on March 13. The four-day sale will entitle members who open up to 40 percent discount on selected items, buy-one-take-one on others and offer prizes on top. S&R management senior vice-president Jose Ernesto Ortigas said the sale is designed to reward the membership base and expand new ones. The highlight of the sale could end of the discount and special meals to be offered during the sale period which will end on March 16. S&R outlets are located at The Fort, Taguig City, Alabang, Muntinlupa City, Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City and Bonifacio, Parañaque City.

The University of Manila cites Senator Richard Gordon

SENATOR RICHARD GORDON WILL BE AWARDED THE BIYAYANG LUZ AWARD, Rhetorical Medallion of Honor by The University of Manila on March 15, at the Old Quadrangle assembling to the university president and chief academic officer, Dr. Emily Dodson De Leon. The senator will be the commencement speaker and will be cited for his dedicated service to the country and the Filipino people as a governmental official and for his humanitarian endeavors while serving the Philippine National Red Cross as its long time governor and life honorary PNRC Chair. The rites will be led by Dr. Emily De Leon, president and chief academic officer. The grand Old Lady and employees Dodson De Leon. The senator will be the commencement speaker and will be cited for his dedicated service to the country and the Filipino people as a governmental official and for his humanitarian endeavors while serving the Philippine National Red Cross as its long time governor and life honorary PNRC Chair. The rites will be led by Dr. Emily De Leon, president and chief academic officer. The grand Old Lady and employees Dr. Ma. Jocelyn Amor, 25 years; Imelda Trinidad, 30 years; and Marissa Manalac, 30 years. On March 17, Feb. 4; Myrt Blastengal. Others with officials the Graduation Mass followed by the Baccalaureate Service with Rev. Fr. Enrique F. Santos as speaker. Prelate USUFF Fred. de C. Pamon with grace the high school and elementary graduation as its guest speaker.

Bits Chips

Political stalemate seen stalling fiscal reforms

Nido eyes drilling of 1st well under SC 58

By Abigail L. Ho

AUSTRALIAN FIRM NIDO Petroleum Ltd. will drill its first well under Service Contract 58 in offshore Northwest Palawan before July 2008, following the expected completion of the analysis of data gathered from the contract area.

In its 2007 financial results presentation, the company said the Department of Energy had given it a 12-month extension on sub-phase 2 of its SC 58 work program.

This extension, in effect, pushed back the start of sub-phase 3—which included the drilling of one exploratory well—to January 2009.

Sub-phase 3 will run for 18 months.

"[This] means that the company has until January 2009 to fully interpret the large volume of seismic data to be acquired in 2007 prior to committing to drilling a well in sub-phase 3," Nido said.

However, Nido still has one commitment well to drill next year.

The SC 58 commitment well, under the company's approved work program, should be drilled starting Feb. 4, 2008, marking the end of sub-phase 3 for that contract area.

Nido entered sub-phase 3 for SC 58 in August last year.

Both SC 54 and SC 58 were covered by Nido's largest seismic acquisition campaign to date, which involved gathering 3,475 kilometers of 2D and 826 square kilometers of 3D seismic data over a 120-day period from September 2007 to January 2008.

The seismic data for 2007 financial report placed the cost of this seismic campaign at around $12.7 million.

"Nido also completed a preliminary prospect and lead inventory in SC 54 and SC 58, identifying 100 leads across a targeted play types in water depths ranging from 100 meters to 1,500 meters. Several of these leads showed potential for oil in place in volume greater than 500 million barrels," the financial report stated.

In an earlier interview, Nido chair David Bradley said the company would come out with its top 20 leads by the middle of this year, paving the way for the finalization of a five-year drilling program for its three contract areas.

Gov't may back track on programs to gain popularity

By Gavin C. Dumlao

NEW YORK-BASED THINK TANK Global Insight said a prolonged political stalemate in the Philippines could be a threat to the government's fiscal reform commitments and a wildcard that could keep financial markets jittery through 2008.

"While the real economy and even financial markets may be able to withstand short-term domestic tension, the long-term picture will not be as sanguine if reforms stall," Global Insight said in its monthly country report dated March 10.

Written by Filipino economists Romeo Bernardo and Margarita Gonzales, the report entitled "Slow Ride," noted that a stalemate" has emerged. While many actions have not reached a critical mass sufficient to oust the President, it said the political noise was likely to persist in the years ahead.

The Senate, which is dominated by the opposition, is expected to continue investigating perceived anomalies in government transactions, fueling unrest, the report said.

"The administration will in turn scrutinize the use of its influence and resources to stay in power. While it may not necessarily escalate, the likelihood for open administration can be expected to become increasingly ineffective as a result of a prolonged political turmoil," it said.

Over the short term, Global Insight said bouts of political instability would not likely yield lower growth numbers immediately given the momentum generated by domestic demand, allowing the domestic economy to grow by at least 5.3 percent this year.

But while headline growth for the year remains somewhat shielded from political instability, financial markets may be vulnerable to domestic tension, the think tank said.

"The more worrisome aspect of having the country locked in a state of protracted political turmoil is the prospect of reforms stalling and the possibility of the administration resorting to populist though not necessarily sensible economic measures to win support and gain popularity," it said.

Global Insight cited various proposals to divert fiscal policy such as an indefinite postponement of a scheduled cut in the corporate income tax to that larger tax shields for individual taxpayers can be limited and the suspension of the value-added tax on petroleum products to help contain fuel prices.

"In general, backsliding on reform measures may erode the credibility of the fiscal programwhich, if it materializes, could serve as a negative signal to creditors especially as tax impetuses target has already been missed (34 percent in 2007 versus a 34.7-percent tax effort goal)," it said.

In the case of the bid to defer the scheduled decline in corporate income tax rate, Global Insight said this might weigh down on the country's competitiveness given that the Philippines had the highest corporate rates in emerging Asia and receives relatively low amounts of foreign direct investments.

While the legislated rate is high, corporate revenue in proportion to gross domestic product has been low due to the granting of fiscal incentives, tax evasion, and poor tax administration. Delaying reforms in the tax promises the scarce burden for narrow corporations who pay properly and those who do not, Global Insight said.

"With the Senate focused on investigating scandals, right-minded legislation may fall by the wayside, including the proposed reduction of excise taxes to inflation and revenue losses of fiscal incentives," it warned.

Global Insight said funding for proposed tax relief, for instance, could be raised from the removal of redundant fiscal perks and adjustment of sin taxes, revenues from which have fallen from 2.2 percent to 1 percent of GDP since the last decade largely due to inflation erosion.

Ceramics firm embarks on network expansion

By Reena F. Domingo

LEPANTO CERAMIC TILES INC. IS GOING for a 20-percent growth in sales this year from about 97.90 million pesos in 2007 through an aggressive expansion of its network of dealers and the strengthening of its brand.

Jonathan C. Co, head of the firm's sales and marketing unit, said in an interview that Lepanto Ceramics was able to triple its network of national and regional distributors to 300 in the past year.

"We are also strengthening our brand by reaching base with consumers and industry influencers...like architects and distributors," Co explained.

Also, Co said Lepanto Ceramics had doubled its range of tile designs to 288 in the past 12 months.

The designs were launched yesterday during the opening of the five-day 10th WorldBest building materials expo being held at the World Trade Center in Pasay City.

The official said industry sales were growing at double-digit levels yearly, with last year's turnover reaching some P6 billion.

He said local players faced the challenge of having more than half of domestic demand being met by imports, aside from "problems in the implementation of tariffs that are already in place."

Co said the proliferation of cheap and substandard imports made the playing field uneven at the expense of domestic firms.

Gov't debt burden eases ...

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this was more than offset by the 11-percent drop in foreign currency-denominated debt from P1.697 trillion to end-2006.

The Treasury said the appreciation of the peso against the dollar helped slashed the government's debt denominated in foreign currencies. It added that the government paid more debt last year than in the previous year, thus helping trim the overall debt stock.

The peso closed at 41.481 to a dollar in December 2007 compared with 49.110 in December 2006, data sources from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas showed.

Meanwhile, the Treasury also reported that the government's contingent debt swelled to P482 billion as of end-December 2007, down 15 percent from P569.9 billion as of end-December 2006.

The latest contingent debt also stashed a 3-percent drop from P499.6 billion as of end-November 2007.

Contingent debt represents the liabilities of state-owned firms that carry a sovereign guarantee. In case of a default of the borrowers, the national government will shoulder the debt.

RP qualifies for ...

Front page B4

Philippines' consistent performance on eligibility criteria and its effective implementation of the MCC-funded Threshold Program focused on helping curb corruption through improved tax and customs administration and strengthening of their Ombudsman's office," the MCC said in a statement.

The MCC decides whether a country is eligible for a certain amount of funding based on several criteria, including the level of improvement in achieving good governance, investment in people and implementation of policies that promote economic freedom.

In 2006, the Philippines qualified for the threshold category and got a $25 million grant good for a three-year period from MCC.

The Department of Finance earlier said the Philippine government was hoping to qualify for the compact category and get a $300-million grant from the MCC.

Filipinos still holding on ...

Front page B1

dental corporations—are considered as the country's second layer of foreign reserves, having twice their P1.202 deposits are given a preferential tax rate of 7.5 percent compared with the 20-percent tax rate slapped on peso deposits.

The latest P1.202 deposit level likewise went up by 3.28 percent from $18.26 billion as of end-December 2007.

For the whole of 2007, FCDU deposits surged by 1.90 percent over the previous year's $17.916 billion even if the US dollar had depreciated by 16 percent against the peso, which was Asia's lone performing currency last year.

Raul Sinsuangco, president of DFCI Inc., the overseas Filipino-focused thrift bank subsidiary of the Ayalas' flank of the Philippine Islands, told some people are "building up their personal dollar reserves for a number of reasons...by dint of habit, expectation of future requirements such as for traveling or importation or simply because they think that the US dollar would still be a good currency haven for the long term.

"A lot of people still feel that the strengthening of the peso may be an aberration but if you're looking over a longer term, say 10 years from now, they may still be better off holding the US dollar," Sinsuangco said in an interview yesterday.

Stocks close 1.5% higher

Front page B1

1.2 billion shares valued at P1.3 billion.

"Investors lowered confidence high of relief after seeing the Fed making another bold move to address the credit crunch. But the big question now is whether this monster will ease what ails the US economy," said Gaware Tan of Regina Capital Development Corp.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. closed up P8 at P2,800, after rising as high as P2,868.

San Miguel "B" rose a peso to P99.50. Its "B" shares advanced 4 pesos to P98.

Manila Electric Co. or Meralco rose 50 centavos to P79. AFP

European firms eye greater presence in Mindanao

Southern regions overlooked due to peace and order concerns

By Roland W. Dominguez

THE EUROPEAN CHAMBER OF Commerce of the Philippines yesterday said it was to talk with the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry on "investigating business opportunities" and cooperation as European firms eye a greater presence in Mindanao.

Henry Schumacher, ECCP executive vice president, said a delegation interview yesterday that the move was being made as the group realized that its members were not paying enough attention in Mindanao.

Asked what reasons the member companies are looking to, Schumacher said: "That is actually what we want to know."

He said European firms were relatively not appraised of opportunities in southern Philippines because they had tended to avoid the region due to "reasons we see all know," by which he meant concerns about security and peace and order.

"We have floated the idea of forming something like a European-Mindanao Business Council although that is a long way to go," Schumacher said.

"Our exploratory talks with the Davao City Chamber continues to that goal and those activities around also can be pursued and what we want to do," he added.

Further, Schumacher said the ECCP have long yearned to work with organizations in Mindanao and look at business opportunities there.

"We believe there are partnerships that can be made in Mindanao and the Davao City Chamber represents the biggest business grouping over there," he said.

Currently, the DCCCI has 316 corporate and individual members involved in agriculture, construction, design, finance, health, information technology, real estate, tourism, and the utilities industries.

"Davao City has been at the forefront of developments in Mindanao," he said. "It has a sustained growth over the last 18 years with basic infrastructure already present and sustainably being modernized."

The ECCP chief then which showed that last year, total investments in the Davao region reached P8.18 billion or 161 percent higher than 2006, of which foreign direct investments accounted for P48.7 million or 144 percent higher than the previous year's.

Another plus factor for Davao City was that it has seen an increased arrival of tourists that led to the opening of several domestic airlines.

Still, Schumacher said the ECCP would also try to work hand with the Cagayan de Oro Chamber of Commerce on similar terms as well as the Cebu Chamber of Commerce and industry on a broader terms.

The ECCP which is celebrating its 30th anniversary in May has some 700 member companies has with only 30 of them having operations in Mindanao.

Schumacher said some of those firms are Nestle Philippines which has a coffee factory in Cagayan de Oro, STEAG which has a power plant in Misamis Oriental, and others that are involved in sourcing abaca and seaweed.

Schumacher said other European companies like the European Commission Delegation and the German Technical Cooperation were conducting their own activities in Mindanao, which the ECCP hopes to link up with to strengthen private sector involvement in the region.

Asian Spirit starts Korea flights

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CLARK FREEPORT—ASIAN SPIRIT WILL serve the Clark-Incheon (South Korea) route via the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA) here starting March 18.

Starting with three flights a week, Asian Spirit will increase the flights to five beginning March 24, according to Jose Victor Luciano, president and chief executive officer of the state-owned Clark International Airport Corp.

The airline will fly to the DMIA every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. On Fridays, Asian Spirit will fly to Kalibo, Aklan, and proceed to the DMIA to get passengers for Incheon.

"The flights of Asian Spirit at DMIA will reinforce further the growth of foreign tourism to visit Clark and the rest of Central and Northern Luzon," Luciano said in a statement.

Luciano said Asian Spirit executives detailed to note the Clark-Incheon route after President Macapagal-Arroyo in February declared the DMIA as the country's premier international airport.

Mr Arroyo, he added, is due to sign an executive order allowing foreign air carriers and local airlines "unlimited access to fly to Clark."

The CIAC reported that the DMIA has averaged 34 flights a week.

Asian Spirit and Hong Kong Express are the latest additions to the airlines based at the DMIA.

The three carriers are Asiana Airlines, Tiger Airways, Air Asia, China Southern Airlines, South East Asian Airlines (Drake) and Cebu Pacific.

Hong Kong Express began open-charter flights for the Clark-Hong Kong route on March 5.

The government is expanding the DMIA passenger terminal to enable it to serve two to two million passengers yearly.

'Dutch Disease' seen to drag RP growth

PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC GROWTH will fall sharply this year due to an overvalued peso and businessmen who fail to reinvest their profits, a think-tank said yesterday.

After gross domestic product (GDP) struck a 31-year high with growth of 7.3 percent in 2007 and inflation is a 28-year low of 2.8 percent, the Philippine Institute of Development Studies said growth would fall.

It forecast GDP growth this year should drop to 5.9 percent with inflation rising to 5.2 percent.

Rafaelita Aldaba, president, Ateneo de Manila University, said the Philippines was suffering from "Dutch Disease," as characterized by a shrinking manufacturing sector and a sharply appreciating currency.

"That's a sign of trouble ahead," he said.

"There indeed will be a slowdown," through growth "will still be a respectable 5.9 percent in 2008," he told a public forum in Manila.

The forecast was before the official GDP growth target of 6.3-7 percent.

Services and agriculture will overcome to be the main drivers, while manufacturing growth would be at an even lower 3 percent from 3.3 percent last year, he said.

He said inflation "will likely breach the (official) target of 4-5 percent. Our forecast is 4.8 to 5.2 percent, or at the very least on the high side of the (government) target."

"The peso is overvalued by roughly 9 to 10 percent," he said. "Which is the main thing constraining our manufacturing sector."

Yap also said that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas could do more to temper the rise of the peso.

He said the amount spent by the BSP to rein in the peso was much lower than the amount spent by other countries.

Yap said the BSP spends less than 1/8 percent of the country's GDP to intervene in the foreign exchange market, compared to 20 percent for China and Malaysia and as much as 60 percent for Taiwan and Singapore.

Meanwhile, investment were plunged to 13.8 percent of GDP in 2006 from 21.2 percent in 2000, he said, stating government data.

Imports of durable equipment for manufacturing fell to 46 percent of GDP in the nine months to September 2007 compared with the 63 percent of GDP measured during the Asian financial crisis in 1997.

"Traditional elitist conglomerates" were not investing profits and lowering the cost of doing business "because they are running profits anyway," Yap said. AFP, Michelle V. Ramos

GMA 7 narrows lead of ABS-CBN in ratings

By Dante L. Lucas

THE COUNTRY'S SECOND-largest broadcast network yesterday said that it now stands within a hair's breadth of overtaking the top ratings spot on a nationwide basis from industry giant ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., based on the latest survey results.

In a press statement, GMA Network Inc. said it "stands ready to take the number one spot from its biggest competitor" as its nationwide television ratings performance "showed an evident pattern of growth."

Based on AGB Nielsen's nationwide urban TV audience measurement (NUTAM) survey from Feb. 24 to March 1, GMA Network maintained equal ranking with ABS-CBN in terms of total day people ratings, the company said.

It claimed that both networks' ratings were tied at 7.9 percent.

If GMA Network is able to wrest the top nationwide spot from ABS-CBN, it will have an impact on the company's revenues as a broadcast company's advertising rates are based primarily on its ratings.

While GMA Network has held the top ratings spot in Metro Manila for the last few years, ABS-CBN has so far dominated the national ratings, due partly to the ratings mark afforded by its larger network of provincial stations.

In its statement, GMA Network said that it trailed its rival by only 0.7 percent in terms of total day household ratings. ABS-CBN posted a total day household rating of 17 percent while GMA posted 16.3 percent.

The company pointed out that 15 of the top 30 programs were from GMA Network.

Locally produced television "Machine" ranked first on the list, while other GMA Network programs "Joaquin Bordado" and "Kamandag" occupied the second and third slots, respectively.

The company said that it also dominated the airwaves of southern and central Luzon, where 28 of the top 30 programs came from GMA Network.

ALTERNATIVE THINKING ABOUT SERVER ROOMS
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DOT entices photo enthusiasts to RP

THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM is positioning the country as Asia's capital for aquatic photography and sports by showcasing the country's marine biodiversity.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said in a statement the agency took part in the 2008 Our World Underwater Show held last month to bring it more Asian travellers to the Philippines.

Considered the biggest and largest dive event in the US Midwest, the three-day expo drew in over 15,000 scuba diving professionals and enthusiasts, as well as travel trade businessmen.

The DOT joined 150 dive travel operators, educators, dive equipment vendors and environmental groups showcased at the event held in Rosemont village.

"Our participation at this year's Our World Underwater Show helps to strengthen our position in the tourism-wise sports market," Durano said.

"The country's ability to provide an exceptional diving experience lies in having one of the world's most diverse marine life, as well as the warm smiles and hospitality that great tourism shows the nation," he added.

Some of the showcased dive sites included Anilao in Batangas, Puerto Galera in Mindoro, Cebu, Bohol, Dumaguete and Palawan.

To further excite the American diving community, international-ly published photographer, lecturer, marine naturalist and dive travel leader Lynn Funkhouser headed a special expo seminar entitled "Philippine Dive-ersity."

The DOT said that Funkhouser, an inaugural member of the Women Divers Hall of Fame, has explored over 200 of the country's underwater wonders over the past three decades.

Durano said the DOT planned to strengthen diving and snorkeling as two of the top tourism products, adding that destinations which offer such activities were now starting recognition around the world.

Roland W. Dominguez

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BUSINESS

LandBank's hybrid note offering OKd

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS has approved a plan of state-owned Land Bank of the Philippines to offer $100 million worth of hybrid notes that will qualify as tier 1 or core capital.

BSP sources yesterday said the policy-making Monetary Board had approved "in principle" LandBank's plan to sell the notes.

In a separate interview, LandBank vice president Alex Macapagal said the bank would still have to seek the final approval of the BSP once the coupon rate and other details of the plan had been firmed up.

But while the bank had obtained inspiration from the central bank, Macapagal said it would await a favorable timing for the launch of the bond offer.

"The [offering] market is not too good right now," Macapagal said, noting that the bond float would likely be completed within the first semester.

LandBank has appointed Deutsche Bank and Citigroup as financial advisers for the issuance, Macapagal said.

The bank plans to conduct roadshows in Hong Kong and Singapore to sell the hybrid bonds.

Hybrid capital instruments have equity-like features that make them acceptable as Tier 1 or core capital under the Basel 2 capital adequacy framework used across the globe. They have a "perpetual" nonstep and are redeemable by the issuer only subject to BSP approval. They may be in the form of unsecured subordinated debt or preferred shares and allow banks to absorb losses similar to common equity.

LandBank has been planning to issue the hybrid notes since last year but unfavorable market conditions stalled the offering.

Proceeds from the hybrid notes is seen boosting LandBank's capital adequacy ratio (CAR) to 18 percent from about 15 percent using Basel 2 guidelines.

—Doris C. Dumlao

Gov't seen issuing 10-yr bonds for BSP recapitalization

Completing P50-B seed money committed to Bangko Sentral

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT HAS FIRMED UP A scheme to complete within this year the much-needed P48-billion recapitalization of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, which is reeling from huge foreign exchange losses due to the peso's strengthening against the dollar.

Government sources said the scheme calls for the issuance by the national government of 10-year peso bonds, possibly in two tranches, within the year.

A finance official said the plan would be presented to government economic managers for approval.

Other sources said that under the plan, the government would sign an obligation authority to set aside P4 billion yearly in the next 10 years to build up the funds needed to cover the P48-billion bond issuance this year.

The amount to be raised would form part of the P50-billion seed money that the government had committed to infuse into the BSP when the independent central bank was created in 1993.

Separate sources said the scheme would be announced in the next few days. They said the government recognized that the BSP recapitalization was an urgent matter now that the central bank was incurring huge foreign exchange losses. To avoid imposing heavy burden on the government's finances, in view of its bid to wipe out fiscal deficits and achieve a balanced budget this year, the government is favoring the bond issuance scheme, proceeds of which would be used to recapitalize the BSP.

The scheme will enable the BSP to get the money immediately this year while the cost burden on the government will be staggered over a 10-year period.

Other sources said that while the BSP would get the cash proceeds upfront, the P48 billion bond float will not necessarily be in a single tranche.

"It's possible that the first P30 billion will be raised in the first half and then the remaining in the second half [of 2008] depending on market conditions," one source said.

From January to November last year, the BSP incurred P84 billion in foreign exchange losses leading it to post a P62.5-billion net loss. The amount was charged by the BSP against the capital accounts built over the years. From P286.6 billion as of end-2006, the BSP's capital accounts fell to P197.5 billion in the first 11 months of 2007.

Marina says deadline for vessel conversion stays

By Rica T. Dichondra

THE MARITIME INDUSTRY AUTHORITY (Marina) said it would not extend the April 30 deadline for black oil tanker operators to convert or replace their vessels with double-hulled tankers.

"Press reports recently that the deadline was extended from early April to April 30. Actually, the deadline has always been April 30, that was our country's commitment to IMO [International Maritime Organization]. Companies have to inform Marina of their vessel conversion on or before April 30," Marina Administrator Vic Sto. Tomas said in an interview.

The administrator said Marina would cancel the licenses of oil tankers as well as move them from the Philippine registry if they would not comply with the requirement.

"So far only 40 Oldek oil tankers have been registered as double-hulled, out of the 114 tankers currently in our registry. Perhaps companies are taking their time thinking there will be an extension. I must inform them that it is not in my power to do that. They would have to take it up with Marina's board," Sto. Tomas said.

The IMO International Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution, which the Philippines ratified in 1996, mandated the phaseout of single-hull vessels by 2008 for fuel tankers and by 2010 for refined petroleum tankers.

LIFESTYLE
Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan

Debonair chefs cook for their significant other

They take up the Lifestyle challenge—whip up original dishes to sweep their women off their feet STORIES ON C1-C4

ADLAWAN Leadlee

TRISTAN Encarnacion

SONNY Ong

EUGENE Raymundo

Others saw landscapes.
We saw places where people can discover the true meaning of leisure.

LANDCO

LIFE AT YOUR LEISURE

"A life of leisure and a life of laziness are two things." – Benjamin Franklin

"He enjoys true leisure who has time to improve his soul's estate." – Henry David Thoreau

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Steamed Fish Fillet in Light Soy

Max's Restaurant since 1945

Romance in bed and breakfast

For young chef and food stylist Eugene Raymundo, love is more delicious the morning after

By Virgie Baga-Reyes

CANDLELIT DINNERS are overrated. Noted young food stylist and chef Eugene Raymundo prefers breakfast in bed with pancakes and fruits spread nicely in a warm, cozy bed.

For him, a couple having the first meal of the day together in bed keeps the fire burning, so to speak, for the rest of the day.

"Breakfast in bed has more thrill and excitement especially when your partner least expects what you are up to," Raymundo said.

"You wake up ahead of your partner and quickly sneak out of the room to execute your plan. Then you go back, give your partner a light shove to make him/her up and present your masterpiece. It's really something unexpected rather than a dinner in a fancy restaurant."

"It's even more ideal if you become spontaneous, like while sipping freshly brewed coffee, you suddenly decide out to go to work anymore and just while away the day cuddled up to bed watching your favorite 1993 movies," Raymundo said.

The chef prefers a healthy but easy-to-prepare breakfast meal. Raymundo feels couples must prepare a balanced set of meals because good, nutritious food means not only healthy living but also longer life for each other.

He serves Low-fat Prawns and Asparagus Omelette with Mini-Cinnamon Toasties and Lemon-Ginger Sorbet.

"It's low-fat but enough to give you the energy for the day. And so you will feel full."

Gym-rat, balanced diet

Raymundo, 33, is a morning person. A hotel and restaurant management graduate of the University of Santo Tomas, he starts his day by going to the gym at Fitness First Platinum at 7 a.m.

There he visits his roommate called Hot Cross at Tribeca in Quezon City where he is the executive chef.

For a special occasion, Raymundo cooks up a classic omelette using four of egg whites blended with low-fat milk. Instead of French toast to go with the omelette, he opts for toasted whole wheat bread with cinnamon drizzled with maple syrup. Fresh strawberries sit nicely on the side of the plate.

The Lemon and Ginger Sorbet helps cleanse the palate.

More or less, it takes about 20 minutes to prepare the meal, except for the sorbet which, Raymundo says, you can do the night before.

"The good thing about serving omelette is that you can juice it up and make use of whatever stuff you have in the kitchen—seafood, canned tuna, barbecued meat, spiced ham, corned beef or even cheese. Check your fridge ahead of time," he suggested.

You can also resort to experimenting with leftovers. For instance, leftover adobo from last night's dinner can be made into adobo omelette. You can also use your creativity on excess vegetables and fruits in the fridge. Add cottage cheese and honey to chilled oranges, tangerines or bananas and serve in a nice plate.

"Or, it can be as simple as serving instant noodles. Let's admit, not all guys can really cook. Just put something in the soup to make it your own, such as shredded chicken or roasted beef. Your partner will appreciate the effort you put into it. But, don't serve it on an iron bowl. Put it in a nice container for added elegance."

If possible, Raymundo said, serve everything in one big tray with flowers. Presentation counts a lot. It will reflect all your effort aside from providing visual impact.

"Romance is simply a state of mind, an attitude. It doesn't have to be fancy. Do creative and have some fun. It will be a breakfast you both will never forget."

RAYMUNDO prefers healthy, easy-to-prepare breakfast meals.

Low-fat Prawns and Asparagus Omelette

2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1/2 pc baby prawns, peeled and deveined
1 bunch asparagus, cut into spears
½ tsp salt
1 whole egg
½ egg whites
½ c low-fat milk
½ tsp garlic powder
1 tbsp parmesan cheese
Pinch of pepper

In a nonstick pan, sauté prawns in oil until it turns pink. Add asparagus and season with salt and pepper. Remove from the pan and leave remaining oil.

In a bowl, beat egg and egg whites with garlic powder. Pour into hot oil and swirl around the pan to make an even "pancake."

Reduce heat and cook until it starts to dry out. Place cooked prawns and asparagus in the middle and sprinkle with cheese. Fold sides over filling and cook for 4 minutes. Serve immediately and top with caviar or chive, if desired.

Serves 2.

Lemon-Ginger Sorbet

¼ c lemon juice
¼ c honey
½ tsp ginger juice or 1 tsp chopped ginger
1 tbsp low-fat milk
1 c ice

Place all ingredients in a blender and process until slushy. Transfer to a metal container and cover. Freeze overnight. Scoop out just before serving.

Mini-Cinnamon Toasties

4 slices whole-wheat bread
1 cup butter
Ground cinnamon
Maple syrup

Cut bread into small circles using a cookie cutter or triangles using a knife. Spread a little butter on one side and sprinkle a little of cinnamon on top. Toast buttered bread slices for 5 minutes. Top with maple syrup and serve with fruits if desired.

Serves 2.

Seafood for his girlfriend

For television chef Tristan Encarnacion, his waifish model-fiancee deserves something filling

By Vanessa C. Burgos

SINCE HIS GIRLfriend Stephanie Tee, a commercial model, relishes seafood, "Unang Hirit's" resident chef Tristan Encarnacion concocts Pan-seared Tuna with Mustard Cream Sauce.

"I like this dish very much, as I know that she would love this, too," the 28-year-old chef said.

On special occasions, Encarnacion cooks Asian cuisine for Stephanie. But most of the time, they dine out. "With food, there's more adventurous than me."

When he's alone, Encarnacion prefers home-cooked meals like kaldereteng baka, which he prepares or buys from a carinderia.

Encarnacion is inspired by his late grandmother Orbie, who ran a carinderia, and mother Eleanor who loves to bake.

His first experience in the kitchen was frying eggs and hotdogs when he was a kid.

But it never crossed his mind that he could make a career out of cooking. "I've always liked to cook, but what I really wanted was to become a TV reporter or correspondent," Encarnacion said.

This was why he took up communications arts at the University of Santo Tomas. But when he got a Hub Pass, which meant he was only a step away from being kicked out of school, Tristan moved to the Center for Culinary Arts (CCA) Manila.

"The real reason I grabbed it was, I saw it as the only option available to me at the time. I was actually afraid my parents would send me to America and force me to take up a course I didn't like."

Tough job

During his first year at CCA, Tristan enjoyed learning new recipes and trying out all the food after he and his classmates were done cooking.

"It was on my second year that I got a clearer glimpse of how tough a chef's job could be. It was physically and mentally taxing," he said.

It was then that he realized cooking was something he wanted to do for the rest of his life. "I believe in its presence, so I actually enjoyed it," Encarnacion said.

After getting his Diploma in Culinary Arts from CCA, he served for a few months before applying for a job.

"My dad's (the late Isandro, or as I call him, Sonny) Asian restaurant was already quite slow, so I decided to spend more time at home with him," he said. "He was my best friend."

A month after his dad passed away, he went to the United States to work for a new hotel in Naples City, Florida.

"I got hired by Marco Beach Ocean Resort. I started out flipping burgers by the beach. Then I moved up to handle the fresh pasta and brunch station, the breakfast station, the cold and dessert station, and then the grill and sauce station."

Guessing stint

In 2003, he came home for a vacation. "I realized I missed my family so much that I decided to stay," says Encarnacion. He had a short stint in a resort in Subic.

"I quit and decided to concentrate on being a personality for several months. I guess I got burned out."

But destiny did not allow him to stay out of the kitchen for long. In 2005, he got a call asking if he wanted to be a guest chef on GMA-7's morning show "Unang Hirit." He never thought this gig would change his life forever.

In 2006, Encarnacion's mom brought up the idea of him having his own restaurant. Bistro Breve opened in Quezon City.

But a bigger break was yet to come. In 2007, Discovery, an international cookware brand, launched Tristan's Chef's Classics, making him the first Filipino chef to endorse a cookware line.

"I believe this is exactly where I'm supposed to be," Encarnacion said.

TRISTAN Encarnacion in action

Pan Seared Tuna with Mustard Cream Sauce

120 g fresh tuna, sashimi quality
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste
2 tbsp olive oil
Season both sides of the tuna with salt and pepper.

In a hot pan with olive oil, sear both sides of the tuna. Remove from the pan and allow the tuna to sit aside and set it aside.

For Mustard Cream Sauce:
1 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp shallots, chopped
2 tsp fresh sage, chopped
½ cup all purpose cream
2 tbsp whole grain mustard
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste

Sauté shallots and sage in a pot with oil. Add the cream and reduce. Strain the reduced cream in a bowl and whisk in the mustard.

Check the seasoning before serving.

Put a nice amount of mashed potato on the plate. Top with sautéed wild mushrooms. Add the sliced tuna and top with cherry tomatoes with vinaigrette. Put the mustard cream sauce around the plate.

PAN SEARED Tuna with Mustard Cream Sauce

Crepes and chocolate kisses

By Rowena C. Burgos

DESCRIBING HIS WIFE Jacqueline Anavel Landico as a "dessert freak," Reden Landico thought of Chocolate Soufflé as the best treat he could give her.

"I rarely create desserts because I'm not the baking type of person, like others I do. I discern chocolate for that's my wife's favorite," said the 33-year old chef, who sometimes makes crepes, mousse and panna cotta.

For Chocolate Soufflé, Landico used Belgian chocolate of "top quality." "This recipe has a thicker consistency but the secret lies in the chocolate and the procedure. It has to be dark chocolate for if you use a white one, it would be too sweet and have a different texture."

Landico and Jeanne met as blockmates in Tourism Management at the University of the Philippines.

"She was my first girlfriend and I was her first boyfriend," Landico said. "On our first date, I remember to go with me to the market at 7 a.m. That was weird in my house and crashed until 6 black ink."

"Despite attending our lunch with that meal, we both had a great time. Since then, we have been inseparable. We went together for 14 years before we got married. And we've been together for 18 years now."

They now have two children, Orlando, 3, and Gianna, 9 months old.

Despite the couple's busy schedule, they never fail to spend quality time with the kids.

"We take turns in taking care of them," Landico said. "I bring Orlando to school and receive guests. Jacqueline and I usually go out dates after work, just in time to catch the last film showing. We're together 20/7. It's an advantage than we're in the same industry."

Jacqueline is resident pastry chef of their family-owned restaurant, Chef Landico Dines: Filipino, Icon of At The Fort.

Belgian Chocolate Soufflé

200 g Belgian chocolate
100 ml cream
6 egg whites
Butter and sugar to coat ramekin
1. Coat ramekin thoroughly with butter and dust with sugar.

2. Melt chocolate and cream in a double boiler until well-blended. Take off from heat, transfer to a mixing bowl and let cool aside.

3. Add sugar to egg whites and whisk until medium peaks. Do not overbeat.

4. Fold 1/3 of the egg whites on top of the chocolate mixture and fold with a whisk or rubber spatula. Continue with the rest of the egg whites.

5. Divide in 4 ramekins (fill up to ¾ only). Wipe the rim off so the mixture can rise without sticking to the sides.

6. Put in 180C oven for 10-15 minutes or until top is puffed up and dry to touch.

7. Serve immediately with a bourbon sauce or caramel sauce. Makes 4 servings.

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SUMMER COOKING FUN AT AICA

Fundamentals of Professional Cooking
Fundamentals for Professional Baking and Pastry

Spicy dinner makes up for spicy night

By Margie Baga-Reyes

FOR CHEF SONNY ONG, nothing beats dinner for two under the stars. Not in moonlit, a feast of fiery-hot dishes to sweat out sensuality glands.

"My wife loves spicy food," said the 30-year-old Richmond's corporate executive chef. "She hardly eats pork and beef so I only cook seafood for her."

Lobsters Fra Diavolo is one dish Ong will soon prepare for her. The lobster is fired up with spicy tomato sauce that's light and "devilishly" simple to make.

Because lobster is naturally lean, it's a great way to eat light. The shellfish's mild flavor makes it an ideal vehicle for all kinds of zesty sauces, and this "diavolo" preparation really makes it.

Loosely translated, *diavolo* means "devil" in Italian, meaning spicy. To pipe it down, just reduce the amount of red pepper flakes.

But before serving the hot entrée, a cold salad is on top of Ong's menu for the evening. Mr. and Mrs. Francis Concordel perk up the meal and add a light, welcoming taste since the refreshing taste of avocado blends well with fresh arugula, shaved parmesan and candied peanuts. It's then drizzled with honey balsamic vinaigrette.

Capping the meal will be Cold Coffee Soufflé in a single add sophistication to the whole romantic ex-perience.

Ong remembers how his wife, Being, fell for him all over again when he prepared dinner for two for their anniversary at the Top of the Citi, where he used to work as a cook, overlooking the Makati skyline. He hired a guitarist and a violinist who played sweet music while they were enjoying a complete meal of soup, salad, fish dish, and dessert.

Ong, a graduate of hotel restaurant of the University of the Philippines, runs a consultancy firm called RJC Cuisine. His food menu with Le Soufflé, Top of the Citi, Greenjar, Seven Stones, The Barn, Toni Rossi's, Mandarin Oriental Hotel and San Miguel Properties Culinary Center. He also worked in some of the best restaurants in the US and Singapore.

Lobsters Fra Diavolo

2 pc lobster tails
olive oil
crushed red pepper flakes
salt and pepper to taste
200 g fettuccine, cooked
1 tbsp light olive oil
1 tbsp butter
3 tbsp onions, sliced
1 tbsp garlic, sliced
crushed red pepper flakes
2 c tomatoes, peeled and diced
¼ c carbonite
½ c green peas
½ c lobster stock/white wine
½ c heavy cream
basil chiffonade to garnish
Preheat oven to 400°F. Marinate lobster tails and season with oil, pepper flakes, salt and pepper. Roast for 25 minutes or until internal temperature reaches 140°F.

For the pasta: In a sauté pan, heat oil and butter in medium flame. Sweat onions and sliced garlic. When onions turn translucent, add pepper flakes and oregano. Sauté for another 2 minutes to release oils of herbs and spices. Deglaze with lobster stock and reduce. Add tomatoes, peas and cream and reduce again to a sauce consistency. Toss freshly blanched pasta and top toasted lobsters. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and fresh basil chiffonade.

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Red Ribbon Celebrates Beautiful Moments with the New Dulce de Leche

As we usher in the New Year, Red Ribbon Bakeshop inspires everyone to "Celebrate Life's Beautiful Moments". From the grand, splendid and noteworthy weddings to the sweet, intimate and more personal affairs, everyone has beautiful moments to be thankful for everyday. While saying "how" to a wedding proposal, hinging "Happy Birthday" to your best friend, blowing your son "Good luck" on his first day of school. Or simply expressing, "Thanks for being everything" Mom! "What we have in common with these days or just especially personal and meaningful days, these moments are definitely made more memorable with a Red Ribbon cake.

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Red Ribbon gives us another reason to celebrate with the introduction of another divine creation, the new Dulce de Leche. Cream layers of perfectly soft cookies and luscious custard cream, wrapped in toasted skillet crumbs. Finished in mouth-watering caramelized milk and caramel icing and delicately covered with delightful crumbles and chocolate spirals. Experience perfectly sweet pleasure with the endlessly satisfying Dulce de Leche!

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Cooking with passion and precision

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO WORK in an Alain Ducasse restaurant?

We had a first hand (though very short) experience recently. Including some very precise to both rinsing and presentation. Perhaps that's the key to how Ducasse can manage several highly rated restaurants around the world, plus three-published books, a culinary school, food processing firms and a publishing arm.

The session was at the Ducasse Colleges kitchen in Ortigas and our teacher was Christopher Larrat, executive chef of the Alain Ducasse Formation (ADF), the professional training center of Ducasse Manila Business. The two institutions have formed a partnership with the SCP developing a culinary arts program for students.

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

Six were chosen from chefs are trained to do three dishes—salad of shellfish, crepinettes and squab. Bretonne style sole cooked in earthenware and lemon sauce.

Hours of preparation

Not everything was started during the session.

For the salad, the octopus had to be done a day—cooked, then marinated in garlic, rosemary and olive oil.

The pastry of the lemon tart had to be formed and baked beforehand.

The sole dish required many hours of preparation. The ironic—it could've cooked other lemon hours. The chicken stock had to be cooked for no less than nine hours. The fish stock was already simmering when we arrived.

The second instruction was how to cut the tomatoes lemon for the salad. Use the lemon nearest the heart, separate the leaves from the core, trim the lower spine of the leaves, shape the upper leaves into an arrow head. The result was a Christmas tree-shaped leaf.

For me, the most important lesson was that very good produce or ingredients made up 60 percent of a good dish, while technique counted for only 40 percent.

Chef Larrat then let us taste the black olives he brought, the best the Mediterranean had to offer. The flavor do ed, pruned salt from France, was always near him as it was difficult to take a pinch, but I did, and I thought it wasn't really salty. Another French paradox!

What the chef didn't have to bring were the seafood he used in the salad and the sole, although Chef Joe Cheong Yan of Endevan said they did have a difficult time scouring small sole of the same size.

The sole required so much attention as the tomatoes. The chef cut off the fins, then filleted them but left intact the flesh connected to the spine. That way, he said, the fish remained whole and the flavor from the fish bones was preserved.

CHEF Christopher Larrat showing how to Alain Ducasse Kitchen Erwan

Detailed requirements

In our group were seasoned chefs like Cecille Soriano of Uptown Place Hotel, J Quinlon of FS Chefs, Myron Sinclaire, chef of Restaurant 9501 and Jill Sandique of the UE Department of Agriculture kitchen.

Dinner consisted of every dish that was cooked. All three preparations certainly made the session richer, and the pictures were more appealing because of those detailed requirements done to superlatives.

What Chef Christopher Larrat really taught was how dishes are standardized in Alain Ducasse's kitchen. Dishes are cooked day in and day out and have to look the same no matter what time you eat at the restaurant.

The dishes were part of La Cuisine de la Riviera, a fusion of Italian and French cooking that's the subject matter at the Alain Ducasse Formation. While Ducasse may seem like a bad career making for the family of trained chefs with knowledge of how ingredients and cooking techniques must together, the process really works.

Larrat's newest patch should be interesting to culinary students. He's worked with the group of chefs—Joel Robuchon, Michel Rostagnis and then Ducasse. For the serious culinary professional, it's a must to work out the best chefs and their restaurants somewhere else since travel merely? A culinary degree is not enough.

E-mail the author at jmanfredi@yahoo.com

THE CONSUMER

How safe is online shopping?

Part 2

By Linda B. Bulilan

MORE AND MORE PEOPLE are buying and selling online through eBay. But how safe and reliable are transactions on cyberspace compared to face-to-face interactions in stores or supermarkets?

A reader complained that G-Cash, Globe's mobile payment scheme, handed his money to somebody but he did not get the merchandise he paid for. He blames G-Cash for giving the money without verifying the legitimacy of the claimant.

Was G-Cash at fault?

I asked a couple of guys who had done business online about safety measures buyers should observe to avoid being victimized by con artists using eBay to take people's hard-earned money.

Australian Albert Lee, who has made a few good buys on eBay, offers some tips to help people decide whether or not to shop online.

"While shopping online is wonderful, it doesn't work like magic. There are a couple of things to 'learn to' tolerate," he says.

As with any planned purchase, Lee says the buyer should familiarize himself/herself with the item he/she wants to buy. The buyer should also make sure the "store" is legitimate or has some credibility.

Checking the seller

"Theoretically, even in a physical store, there's no such thing as 100 percent assurance, but eBay has a system that helps you, discern the reputation of your seller," he says.

He suggests:

(1) Visit eBay's Security Center (pages.ebay.com/securitycenter/) that can provide you resources and assistance for making safety. Familiarize yourself with the ins and outs of online shopping. Most importantly, use your common sense.

(2) Check out the seller's "feedback rating" (pages.ebay.ph/help/feedback/feedback.html) to get an idea of the seller's reputation on eBay.

Buyers and sellers can give a feedback score after each transaction. Trading partners can give positive, neutral or negative feedback and comment on how the other party conducted himself/herself during a transaction.

"Whether you're placing a bid or you're reasonably sold an item, reviewing your trading partner's feedback from previous sales on eBay can give you a good idea of what to expect in the transaction," Lee says.

Check the seller's sales history through feedback as well as his/her current items to get an idea of his/her areas of expertise, eBay suggests. If the seller has only sold swipes so far, for instance, but is now selling plasma televisions, make sure you are comfortable bidding for the item.

Check out the seller's "About Me" page or eBay store, if he/she has one, to learn more about him/her before proceeding with a transaction.

(3) Try to know as much as you can about the item you want to buy, especially if it is not brand-new. Inquire about the condition of a used item, its authenticity or model number. These are not only important factors in making a decision about whether or not to buy, but they may also come in handy later when a dispute arises that needs arbitration.

Check out the prices of similar items that were sold recently. Use the "Completed Listings" option in the search box near the top of most eBay pages.

(4) Communicate. "If you are unsure about the item you are about to bid on or buy, ask the seller a question," eBay advises. "A good seller will always welcome inquiries. You can also e-mail previous buyers about their experiences with the seller.

Click on the seller's name, simply click on the 'Ask seller a question' link in the seller information box on all item pages. The seller will then be sent an e-mail with your question and will respond directly."

Check out the eBay Standard Purchase Protection Program (pages.ebay.ph/help/buy/spppprocess.html) if you have an issue with, say an item that was not received or an item that is not as described.

Lee says eBay has procedures in resolving disputes, misdeeds or problems with another eBay member. Check out the eBay website and be comfortable with it before buying online, he suggests.

Next week we will talk about payment options and address disputes with a troubled consignee.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Amorsolo and Tigas St., Makati City, or e-mail lbulilan@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE

CAPITOL Medical Center Colleges
NURSING

To go wagyu or Shojin Ryori

It was a moment of enlightenment for me but . . .

IN THIS ISSUE
- Debonair chefs cook for their significant other /C1
- How an Alain Ducasse kitchen is run /D4

IT'S A FACT... YOU ARE WHAT you eat! Your food choices affect not only your physical but also your mental, emotional and, some studies say, even your spiritual well-being.

Through the years, people have cried us on buffets. It is evident that eating habits have changed, with many people giving up red meat altogether.

At Yoshinoen Japanese Restaurant at Discovery Mood, which was awarded by Philippine Tatler as one of the five restaurants in the country for 2005, 2006 and 2007, I came across Shojin Ryori.

According to Yoshinoen's Japanese chef Junichi Ichikyama, Shojin Ryori literally means devotion (shojin). The term was introduced to Japan by monks via China and Korea, with the introduction of Buddhism.

"Buddhism practice nonviolence in all aspects of their lives to achieve an exist—the state of enlightenment and liberation which is the highest spiritual attainment for Buddhists. Any form of meat, as believed by Buddhists, experienced cruelty when they were killed.

"Therefore as consumers of meat, nonvegetarians indirectly inflict harm to the animal performing them from reaching nirvana. This is the reason Buddhists avoid eating meat as all sects and promote vegetarianism.

"Traditionally preparing Shojin Ryori is a means of practicing Buddhism itself. Shojin Ryori has settled into the Japanese way of cooking. Eventually a unique Japanese cooking style was developed with practical and refined skills, making it different from China and Korea, with more delicate, vegetable based taste, as the main ingredients.

"Today, Shojin Ryori is better known as a popular vegetarian diet rather than for its Buddhist background."

From what I gather, the biggest challenge of a Shojin Ryori chef is to transform sensual ingredients into dishes that taste like or resemble meat.

And since life is all about choices, I had to make a tough decision—whether to opt for Shojin Ryori or to go for my favorite wagyu yakiniku which is barbecue they cook over Sumida's special Japanese charcoal made from wood found in the world-renowned Mt. Fuji).

Between you and me, the choice wasn't a tough one. Though Shojin Ryori caused my stomach I had yet to feel for nirvana, which I think for me is still long in coming... But perhaps my sautéed wagyu sirloin, cooked over sumida's premium grillers, garlic rice, miso soup and yam? So, wagyu it was! Yummy!

Based on my philosophy and food choices, you now know why I am not a Buddhist and why I remain nonenlightened!

For vegetarians in search of something new or for all those looking for a Lenten gastronomy experience, Shojin Ryori is the means for you! (tel. no. 5053000)

My mother, who will be 77 on May 3, is craving for a fish she called bandilan. She used to eat this fish in the pre-war years. Please tell me where I can buy this fish.

MILA A. SANTOS

Just for your curiosity, Mila! How lucky you are to have her, still!

- Bandilan is dried salted eel.
- Preferably get the bandilan (fillet) variety (barrya). It will be expensive but the bandilan will be softer.
- Another trick you might want to try is soaking bandilan in milk instead of water. It gives it a nice creamy texture.
- I find that the best bandilan are the bandilan sinis at Suryn's Seafood Intl. MARITAN... Slow, soft and sweet inside.

1 if boneless, soaked and baked

Flesh rub off bandilan. Submerge in water. Let soak for 5-6 hours.

Discard water and cook again doing the many water changes. Continue soaking.

After the third water change, soaking is done, drain bandilan. Flake.

Substitute of the fish tastes. I occasionally check my bandilan for saltiness. I don't overcook it either. I find it quite mean to have to re-salt salted fish because I over-soaked it!

1 c spanish quality extra virgin olive oil
1 c onions, chopped
½ c garlic, chopped
2 c canned tomatoes, mashed and chopped, drained
1 c Spanish tomato sauce
2 large bottled pimentos, cubed (adjust quantity to preference)
1/3 c olive oil
2 whole roasted red bell peppers, peeled and cut into strips

Other optional ingredients: ½ c green Spanish olives, 1/3 c capers. I can do without these, however.

In a thick saucepot, heat up olive oil. Sauté onions. Add garlic, bandilan, canned tomato and tomato sauce.

Simmer covered over very low heat for 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

After an hour, when bandilan is plump and looks succulent, add tomatoes, olives, and capers.

By this time, the oil should have separated. It should be on top while the bandilan had settled at the bottom.

Transfer the mixture to a casserole or a baking dish.

Garnish with a lot of bell peppers. Drizzle with an additional 1/3 cup of good extra-virgin olive oil.

Bake in a preheated oven covered with foil at 350°F for 30 minutes.

E-mail the author at rsqmail@inquirer.com.ph

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A diaries wrestle by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA

A. LIPIN — BY JOEL ANNEN

PUGAD BABOY — BY PAT. LINSER

GARFIELD — BY JIM DAVIS

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

ATOMIC AND WEEGY — BY LYNN GARCIA-LANO

GOVERNUTS — BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

RIKO MACHINE — BY RAYDEN ABREN

BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

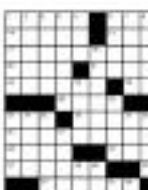
DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Father
6 Mike entered into society
10 Chic Webster
14 Cook shirtless
15 Pie inside
16 Don't mix!
17 Island lass
Dyland quits
Mavis
19 Muffled cheer
21 Tapering
22 Commander
24 Iconic women's magazine
26 Steak tree
27 Lyric's first
28 Eraser
29 Studio killers
30 Appropriate
31 Poker
34 Pam's ex quips
35 "Boogie's love
36 "Psycho" pioneer
40 Dan's son
41 Fast-looking
42 Mars bodies, e.g.
43 Star action
44 Sauce
45 Lord of Lucy
47 Lawyer's
Jurassic
49 Prayer bit
50 Tree of Hyperion
51 Fresh quote
52 Copenhagen
specialties
53 Summertime
relaxation
54 Holding
operations
77 Wish
78 Ray
79 Bone down
ceramics

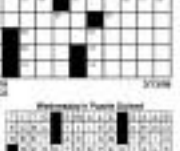
DOWN
1 Time amount
2 Mid-grading
3 Newspaper
periods
4 Cookies and
pretzels
5 Pigeon's CO
6 Worst destiny

7 Flee to zeal
8 Foundations
9 Unpredictable
comedy
10 Top of
discovery
11 Drink
12 Kansas Prayer-
to
13 Jungle
18 Clothes-driving
aid
20 Pay out
23 Hot cat
25 Lost of options
27 Modern
society
28 Dismiss
29 Tax — Winn
31 Bottle green
32 Wine favorites
33 Biting insect
35 Long runs
36 Horse person
37 Ship
38 Dirty dishes
collector
39 Tell
41 Lawyer's case
42 Leslie Nielsen
43 Trademark
event
45 Roll up
46 Intersperse
48 Jam
51 Pacific
destination
52 Photographer's
summary
54 Roll out of
place
55 Bubble bursts
57 Biting utensil
58 Bring to mind
59 Pay or Supply
Cut
60 Pierce or Young
61 Devil
62 Bum on
63 Lassie's dog

By Mitch Dauterman
Washington Heights, NJ



Wednesday's Puzzle Solved



HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

YOU WERE TODAY (born on this day in history) a master of your environment. An unrecognized, intellectual romantic, those of you born this year will be blessed with a sense of humor that will help you through the toughest times. Those of you who were born in 1988 will celebrate a better person. Epicurean. This year might be one of the most powerful years of your life. Happy birthday.

Celebrities born today include Carol Channing, actress; Bill Maher, comedian; Ellen Pompeo, actress; Al Gore, politician; and Carlos Santana, guitarist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 20): You will encounter a challenge today. Don't let yourself worry. If you can find solitude in beautiful surroundings, you will overcome it. You could even plan for the future, having sex...just for you.

TAURUS (April 21 to May 20): A powerful, influential person will offer some helpful advice today. Be sure to listen attentively, and remember what is given. Don't bring important changes that are good for you, such as sex, to fruition.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You have a tendency to be critical of your image at the most trivial times. As you do this, you will become paranoid, reclusive, insecure and very unflattering. Sex is fun.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Your appreciation of beauty is heightened today. Your cards, galleries, experience and beautiful places, especially your home, will be appreciated by people from different cultures. Sex.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You might see something today that surprises you. Or you might see a better way of handling shared property with someone. Or you might see a better way of handling shared property with someone. Sex.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Protect yourself from the sun today. Be sure to wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen. Sex.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You can improve your job today. Be sure to ask for help from others. Sex.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Someone will offer you a better way of doing your job. Sex.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Romance and flirtations are dangerous today. Be sure to be honest with your partner. You might have quite a competition if you're not careful. Sex.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Some of you will be offered a job today. If you do, be sure to improve the appearance of where you live or spend time. Be sure to ask for help from others around you. Sex.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You will accomplish more today than you can imagine. Be sure to ask for help from others around you. Sex.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You will accomplish more today than you can imagine. Be sure to ask for help from others around you. Sex.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU

Conceptis SudoKu By Dave Green

	6			5				
		4	1					3
					8		4	
		8		9			1	
2			5	7	1			8
	3			6		7		
	7		3					
1					7	9		
				4			3	

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SUDOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

8	5	6	3	4	2	9	7	1
9	7	4	1	5	6	2	8	3
2	3	1	8	9	7	6	5	4
1	9	7	4	6	8	5	3	2
3	4	5	2	7	1	8	6	9
6	8	2	9	3	5	1	4	7
5	6	3	7	2	9	4	1	8
4	1	9	6	8	3	7	2	5
7	2	8	5	1	4	3	9	6

TTIA Tillo, Marcella Sammartinelli, chef Massimo Romoaldi and Martina Piccini

MADAME Imelda Marcos and Countess Fedele

DONG Puno and Ana Solongon

TEYET Punzal and Sen. Loren Legarda

Italian wine royalty in town

MANILA GOT A TASTE OF VINTAGE royalty when Italian wine master Martina Piccini flew into town recently to launch the world famous Famous Wines of Piccini.

Manila sommelier Tina Tillo, president of Tenuta Wines Cellar Inc., hosted a dinner for Piccini at Mr Piano of Manila Peninsula last July 25.

Welcoming Piccini to Manila were Italian ambassador Roberto Bobek and Countess Fedele.

Piccini is from the legendary wine-making clan of Tuscany. The brand Piccini, which is especially known for its supreme Merlot, is among the most important wineries in Italy. It is 3.00 percent owned by the family.

The Piccini clan owns 300 hectares of land, 110 hectares of which are in the prestigious wine-producing area of Tuscany.

Martina Piccini belongs to the fourth generation of the wine family. She's the daughter of Pierangelo Piccini, grandson of Angelo Piccini, who founded the winery in 1882. Together with her brother Mario, Martina continues the legacy of the Piccini patriarch: superb oenology.

In Manila, Piccini in particular launched the Sabato Chianti Classico Riserva. The wine is made from the family's Valzano Estate, located in the heart of Chianti Classico area, in Castelnuovo Berardenga municipality. It comes with grape varieties as fine pinot noir with Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot, Chardonnay.

LA SINFONIA

CHILLER sea bass with cauliflower puree and redcurrant champagne foam

Sunday brunch at Makati Shangri-La

SHANGRI-LA MAKATI OFFERS SUNDAY Champagne Brunch at its signature restaurant Red. The Champagne Brunch features 10 culinary specialties plus free flowing Allen & Chandon champagne, Mimosas, Bellini, Chevrolet, Admiral Rouse Wines, Bloody Mary, Virgin Mary and fresh fruit juices.

Red's Chef de Cuisine Rodrigues Lore and his culinary team run the menu each Sunday to combine new specialties and seasonal favorites with selections such as Crab Polenta, Roast of Capricorn and Eggplant Caviar, Oven Baked Pork of Lamb, Rosemary Mozzarella and Lamb Jus, Duck Bruschetta, Grilled Duck and Pate Use Cinnamon Scent, Crispy Chicken Rice Bun, Saffron Risotto, Lime Butter Sauce, Linguini Pasta with Diver Scallops, Thai Beef and Mashed Potatoes, Grilled Angus Beef Tenderloin, Creamy Morel Mushrooms and Crab Polenta, and more.

The fresh seafood selection includes Fine de Claire, Belon, Oyster and New Zealand oysters; Alaskan King Prawns; Lobster Tails and Tiger Prawns; Crab Salmon Carving, chilled lobster bisque with prawns; Lobster Mousse Crudlab.

There's also an array of antipasti, plus Roasted Asparagus and Grilled Mediterranean Vegetables, hot-and-hot basic servings, and an exotic French Cheese Board with Figs, Grapes and Nuts. For confectionaries, the restaurant offers French toast, a choice of bacon and home-made sausages and a selection of Organic Egg Omelet with Parmesan Mushroom, Coriander and more; Ammar Fried Egg, Onion Tomato Salsa and Grilled Whole Meal Bread; Poached Egg, Steamed Capsicum, Smoky Eggplant Dip and Yoghurt; Scrambled Eggs, and Dill Sauce on Focaccia Bread.

For dessert, try the Grissi Brides with Amula Strawberries, Lime Chevrier and Amaretto; Beer Jelly; Red soup; Cream'lissa chocolate Cone; Mango Mousse Cone; strawberry and white pepper mousse; Apple Crumble Tart, Pilsumou Inches, Chocolate Fondant, Raspberry and Plumb on Chocolate, Glue Chocolate Tourte, Fresh Fruit Tartlets in Coconut Shell, Strawberry jelly with Fruits; delicious Macaroons and served Fresh Fruits.

Sunday Brunch at Red is served 11 a.m.–3 p.m. and is available at P2,250 inclusive of sweetie charge and applicable gourmet. Call 8138808 local 77488 or 75891.

CHOICE Marini

CHILLER sea bass with cauliflower puree and redcurrant champagne foam

DINING OUT

Affordable European lunch specials

THE DEDICATION TO INNOVATION OF European cuisine—minus the stiff price tag—are the hallmarks of the new Hermanos menu.

The three-course executive lunch menu includes soup or salad, main course and dessert.

Other items are bite pan, Nordica clam, Caesar's salad, 300 g porterhouse, Australian Angus, steak sizlings like mushroom ragout, sautéed spinach and mango gâteau'rie and Roast Duck Pizza.

Appetizing Lenten offerings

For meat people, Holy Week means a period of fasting and abstaining from meat. In Chelsea Market & Café proffers healthy seafood specials such as Norwegian Smoked Salmon Pizza, Watermelon's Mixed Grill, Roasted Prawns & Pesto'ano Pizza with Preserved Lemons and Hot's Walnut Crusted Chilean Seabass. Pasta choices include Oven-Roasted Seafood & Tomato Cream Pesto and Norwegian Smoked Salmon & Verbena Cream. Non-seafood Lenten dishes include De Mother Cheese Risotto Balls, Jeans Pasta Ala Chevre Calamari and salad selections. Chelsea is located in Serendra, Bonifacio Global City. Call 8557111 or 8855847.

Meatless fare

Observe meatless Fridays without sacrificing taste. The Lenten season, Shanked Chicken Breast offers Lenten id Lola, a Hungria vegetable broth. Or if you prefer an alternative to soup, order Sangria Ship. Other healthy meatless options include Baking Gambas, Bangus Sampia, Grilled Boneless Bangus and Stinjang sa Hawaian Bangus Belly.

Sumptuous seafood

Pan-seared Seabass and Grilled Atlantic White Salmon, served with mixed fresh lettuce in Italian vinaigrette plus a choice of sidings like mashed potatoes, corn on the cob, rice pilaf, an served at Bangus de la Leno.

Other delicious meatless fare are Baked Fish and Shrimps, Lemon Peppered Grilled Lapu Lapu Fish & Chips, Fried Calamari and Seafood Paella. On Easter Sunday, Bangus will hold an Easter Egg Hunt where they will be giving away free rainbow, lobsta and gift certificates.

Bangus is located at 7 Monaco Ext., Powerplant Mall, Rockwell, Calvento Mall, Pioneerside in Greenhills, The Podium, Mall of Asia, Robinsons Galleria, SM City The Block. Call: 9277396, 8981835, 4679565, 7466578, 9156111, 5960887 and 6328656.

Oysters galore

Throughout the month of March, enjoy your taste buds with Fresh Oyster Cocktail with Cilantro Lime Granite, Oysters Baked with Gruyere Cheese and Oyster Rockefeller with Lemon Mornay at The Fireplace of Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila. Call 2451234.

Triple treats for graduates

Make your graduation party extra special with a buffet special at Dusit, Rainforest and Balinese. Every group of 10 diners will get one free buffet. Free drink with stuffed toy and souvenir frame for the graduates. Call 8928000, 7268181 or 6387333.

Oven-baked fresh bread

The Holy Week, bread items from Pan de Manila are perfect pasalubong to loved ones in the provinces.

Visit your neighborhood Pan de Manila. Call 8365468.

Lunch value meals

Spanish cuisine, gracious service and cozy ambiance go together for a dining experience with family and friends at Casa Roma this March and April. Graduates will delight in "Graduation y Celebracion" group meal packages offered until April 20. Casa Roma is located at The Podium, 8th Floor, Ortigas Ave. Mandaluyong City. Call 6310865, Greenhills 3, 7574498; Ilaz-Ilaz, Makati, 8973885, Quezon City 9800689.

ALL THE RIBS YOU WANT

Congo Grille raises Batch 1988 rib to "Celebrate Four More" graduation blowout promo—the ultimate big-mama spareribs for March. By simply dining in groups of four or more, the lolled graduates' parents and loved ones can treat the grad and themselves of either a free 1kg slab of their choice or 20-per-cent rebates on their total bill. Among the many appetizing signature dishes they can choose from is Congo Grille's award-winning Pare Sisig, a savory pork meal with chopped onions, fresh jalapeno bits, and spectacular sauce. There's also Sisig Kapampangan, a crunchy pork meal blended with onions, chili bits, and calamansi. Another classic favorite is Chicken Sisig. A guilt-free, healthy sisig alternative is Tuna Sisig. Congo Grille is also offering 20 new dishes in its nine outlets located in El Pueblo, Ortigas Center, Westgate Alabang, SM City Fairview, SM City San Lazaro, SM City Sta. Rosa, SM City Clark, SM Mall of Asia, SM City Pampanga and in Trinoma. Call 9163589-90, or visit www.congogrille.com.

SUGAR-FREE CHEESECAKE

Health buffs and those on a diet can now indulge in luscious desserts. Kember's new Sugar-free Cheesecake uses Splenda, a sugar substitute for baking. Other light offerings this Lent include Seafood Jambalaya, Seafood Bombe, Bagnet's Stuffed Crabs, Seafood Boil, Fish and Chips and Cajun Shrimps. On Easter Sunday, Gumbo is giving away gift certificates, candies and tokens to lucky guests. Gumbo has branches at Mall of Asia, Robinsons Manila Midtown and SM City North Edsa. Call 5561238 or 9420106.

JAPANESE FUSION CUISINE

A great Japanese fusion cuisine is never too far away for the denizens of the affluent-around Paseo de Roxas and Ayala Ave. Found at Paseo Center, JCC Terrace Cafe has a wide variety of choices for drinks and meals like Beef Hayashi and Curry with rice. This rich, mild curry can soothe away all the stress from work, guaranteed. JCC Terrace Cafe is at G/F, Paseo Center 8117 Paseo de Roxas cor. Gamboa St., Salcedo Village, Makati. Call 8400116 or 8136368.

Easter buffet of international dishes

AN EASTER BUFFET featuring international dishes like Oli Kilo-aya and Leg of Lamb in Bread, Lechon de Leche, Guanaanal Carbonara Penne Pasta, Pepper-crusted Salmon Fricasse, Braised Rack of Pork, Baked Spicy Mussels, Fillet Mignon, pizzas and assorted Dimsum will be offered on March 23 by Seven Corners at the Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila. Indian favorites, Japanese food and desserts are also featured. Call 633-7222.

Lenten family lunch

A lunch buffet for adults and kids is featured by The Heritage Hotel Manila's Rotisa Cafe. Current rate also round of the hotel's 2+1 Lenten Family Retreat on March 16-23, inclusive of three days and two nights stay plus another free one night stay in a newly refurbished Deluxe Room with daily buffet breakfast for two persons and additional complimentary buffet breakfast for two children, six years old below on the last day.

Other perks include 15-percent discount on Easter Sunday lunch for two, free use of the swimming pool, gym, tennis and jacuzzi. Call 8548888.

Sunday brunch

Celebrate Easter Sunday and treat your family to a brunch buffet at The Peninsula Manila. Savor an afternoon tea buffet at The Upper Lobby, or a la carte lunch at Mi Piace, or brunch buffet at Nelson's. Call 8872888 local 6620 or 0917.3266 local 6710 and 6771.

Authentic Cantonese food

Authentic Cantonese cuisine is featured at Edsa Shangri-La Hotels Summer Palace. The hotel's Asiya restaurant showcases Japanese culinary tradition with Western flair. Discerning gourmet can also select Italian dishes on its lunch buffet. Call 6338888.

Treat for adults, kids

Enjoy Sunday brunch for adults and kids at Tender's Hotel. Call 5237811 local 2402.

EASTER eggs from Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila

GOINGS ON

AFTER the excellent turnout in last year's contest...all's set for a bigger and more exciting Yeohlongs Gyudon Eating Contest 2008.

Gyudon eating tilt grand finals set

Gyudon eaters will wage one last battle to once and for all settle the score in the grand finals of the 2nd Yeohlongs Gyudon Eating Contest 2008 to be held March 15, 4 p.m., at the Music Hall, SM Mall of Asia.

Forty big eaters will depart the hunters in the Meat Shoulder of Gyudon Beef Bowls in 30 Minutes category and another 40 will tip in the chance to be 2 Gyudon Beef Bowls Breakers.

The most number of gyudon bowls champion will win P70,000 while the second and third placers will get P50,000 and P30,000, respectively. The fastest eating champions will take home P50,000 while the second and third placers will receive P30,000 and P10,000, respectively.

Learn to cook curry and Roti dishes

Maya Kitchen offers a great introduction to a spice favorite on "Curries and Roti Plus." The seminar is on March 29, 2-6 p.m. Learn to prepare authentic curries with Yoghurt and Tamarind, Aati Chapati, Naan and Puri, Chicken Tandoori, Biryani, Samosa and Potato Mojos.

Before that, enjoy "Classic Pasta" on March 25, 2-6 p.m. Sample Lasagna, Cannelloni, Pennisoca, Carbonara, Aglio Olio, Ravioli and Homemade Flavored Pasta (Fettucine and Tagliatelle).

Both with easy and tasty demos via "Fundamentals of Bakery Production", March 25-28, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Attendees get a free baking cookbook.

Finally, check out the hands on workshop "Basic Culinary," April 1, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Call The Maya Kitchen (Tuesdays to Saturdays) at 8/F, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (formerly Pasay Road), Makati. Call 8863140 or 8815511 local 7891. E-mail thekitchen@libertygroup.com.ph.

Lenten specials

Chef Reggie Aquino will hold the following class schedules.

March 14—Lenten Specials—all saved—Steamed Jumping Bonito with 3 Asian Style Dipping Sauces, Authentic Spanish Bacalao, My Bacalao with Sundried Tomatoes & Roasted Peanuts, Soft Shell Crabs in Black Bean Sauce, Fried Garlic in Aligue Roe Seasoned Flour, Rice with Asian Style with Mixed Vegetables, Prawns Salt & Pepper, Delicious Gonzales Singapore Style

March 15—Seafood & Prawn Buffet—All You Can Eat Wok Grilled Steaks and Seafood Served With An Assortment of Delicious Sauce Based Sauces—Garlic Herb Butter, Tomato Roses, Truffle Sauce, Blue Cheese Butter, Balsamic Reduction, Shallot Butter, Diane sauce, Horseradish Sauce and Cognac, Sides of Pasta in Brown Butter, Sauteed Mushrooms, Broccoli Butter Sauce, Salad with Butter Vinaigrette, Dessert: Butter Rum Cake with Butter Rum Sauce

March 17—Pinoys...Don't We Just Love Them!? Repeat By Special Request—Learn To Use Different Noodles—Vermicelli on Canton, Sukiyaki Like Never Before, Pancit With Pork Leg Center - Pata Pata, Pancit with Scallops and Coriander Peas, Pancit with Chinese Sausage and Coriander Chips, Pork Asado Served With Pancit Salad

March 19—The Many Variations of Saltpicao—All New!—Garlic Loaded & Chili Spiked Saltpicao, Saltpicao with Spanish Olives & Queso Manchego, Saltpicao in Shredded Mushrooms, Spanish Style with Roasted Onions, Saltpicao Tosted In Canned Sauce, Saltpicao "Hunch Style" In Kalamansi Boneless Bonus—Classic Saltpicao. Call 9285246, 9273088 or 0920-8808115.

Cooking demo in Bel-Air

A cooking demonstration at the Gastronomic market in Solenio Village, Bel-Air, Makati will be held in cooperation with the Bel-Air Women's Association and Delimondo. Chefs Ed Quintero and Rissy Sison will whip up spanish Lenten recipes on the schedule (Lenten) on March 15, 10 a.m. Reserved recipes are Sheila of Bacalao a la Vizcaina, Empanada of Salvino.

Call 8443262 or 0917-8002211.

Summer theme parties

Starting March 14, summer activities and rave parties will be sponsored by San Miguel Pale Pilsen. "Summer Babad" will kick off at San Miguel by the Bay in Old Mall of Asia, 666 Coconado in Cebu City, Malaka Shore Square in Davao City and Ilo Zambales.

Pale Pilsen lovers will enjoy loads of beer like Spell in Boracay Dangerous, Give and La Union while Bicolanos will have their share of fun on May 19-21.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Beatrix G. Velarde

Website: www.inquirer.net/entertainment

Rannie's turn

AFTER NARRIMAN JOOF FINALIST DAVID HERMOSADO's exposure as an ex-stripper, it's the turn of fellow contestant and Pil-Am Ramsele Malabuyo's turn to figure in an internet intrigue. Headlined "lesbian" photos, the two-steps turned out to be dude. They merely showed the petite Ramsele cheering around with female friends, bonding each other's breasts. Really much no more compared to previous "libel" exposes — specifically against Antonella Rufo's cheesecake piss last year. (Agnes) San Diego—A

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Pinoy animators get big boost

By Marinel R. Cruz

THE LOCAL ANIMATION COMMUNITY is expected to get a big boost this year, with various groups racing to release the first ever Pinoy full-length animation film.

"Mamay," about the lives of seven kids, is being produced by Cocoliso Media and Film Society of the Philippines (Cinefil), headed by Junice Rose Nolte Bep, Jimi Marcos.

"[The late] Nancy Marcelo and I started this a few years back, with Tatti Ang and Ted Isaac," Marcos told Inquirer.net during a recent visit to the Cinefil office in San Juan. "There have been sporadic efforts to create our own content, but quite stop take off."

Two other full-length animation films are on the drawing board—"Urduja: The Warrior Princess" by Tony Reuteo's AJV Entertainment and "Darna" by Cutting Edge Productions Inc.—both expected to be released within the year.

"We still have one million scripts to go," said Marcos. "I don't want to jinx this project by setting a release date. We started Mamay only last year. Doesn't that work on Urduja began seven years ago."

Marcos said Cinefil is carefully choosing material that's "Filipino in essence and [re-]invents [but not] the usual dominance of tourist spots. If we can't sell the product to our own kids, we can't sell it to other countries."

Cost of production is definitely high, Marcos said, but the group is a determined bunch. "Nalipasan na lahging akon pasilipuan ng crane eh," she said.

(Email the author at mrcruz@inquirer.com.ph)

INEZ MARCOS, Cinefil president, takes a look at "Mamay" frame by frame, literally

GRACE, GRIT, GLAM

Ten "Golden Divas"—Pilita Corrales, Carmen Soriano (in photo) and Carmen Pelaco—winned Most Museum audience in two shows last weekend. Hear ego for the ladies is a space at SMDC, then a show in Cebu and a UN tour. "We're three different personalities," says Pelaco. Different and colorful. E4

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Melanie Marquez defends Janina

By Armin Adina

FORMER MISS INTERNATIONAL Melanie Marquez has come to the defense of new Mr. Philippine World Janina San Miguel, who's being criticized for speaking less-than-perfect English on pageant night last July.

"She blanked out... that doesn't make her bobo," Marquez told Inquirer.

In the question and answer round, judge Veronica Tan asked what role San Miguel's family had played in her pageant prospects.

The uneven candidate flubbed her response and was booked. She asked the audience in the Araneta Coliseum to excuse her blunder. "This is my first pageant," she said. "[and] I'm only 17."

A video clip of that exchange has been uploaded on YouTube.

"The humility she showed is one trait of a beauty queen," Marquez said. She encouraged beauty title aspirants to speak in the Filipino if they are not comfortable with English. "We're in the Philippines; we're entitled to speak in our native language. Let the foreigners adjust/find ways to understand us."

Marquez herself has experienced being lampooned for flawed English. Her advice to Janina's critics: "Before you criticize anyone, you should first give honest to our country."

MARQUEZ: "She has to break."

SAN MIGUEL: "I'm only 17 and it's my first pageant."

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE

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Carmi Martin

Carmi was 38 when she had hairloss. "My dad had thinning hair. I thought this was one of the causes of my problem aside from too much hair coloring and blow drying. I was so depressed when my hairline was receding and I saw my actual scalp. I was devastated. I thought it was hopeless."

Excessive stress, gaps or too much extreme styling methods could cause women's hairloss. To stop falling and thinning, one needs the right treatments. In the Philippines, there's only one hairloss center where advanced treatments and highly trained technologists are found: **Svenson**.

"I was impressed with the results. My hair got thicker, healthier. Svenson made me more beautiful, more confident. I said goodbye to hairloss, goodbye to worries!" Carmi says.

Tessa fought thinning hair as soon as she experienced its early signs. "Thinning hair makes a woman look older. I didn't want that to happen to me. When I noticed lots of hair on my pillow and my

Tessa Prieto-Valdez

hair started to thin out, I immediately bought 'thickening' shampoos. But I was disappointed. They didn't stop my problem. Good thing I discovered Svenson. After a course of treatments, my hair regained its original volume. It's even softer, more lustrous. I could style it any way I want it!"

Eva Abasanta

Eva, on the other hand, wanted best results for her hair. "I didn't want to use other products. I just wanted the best. When a friend recommended Svenson, I decided to try. I had no more falling hair. It's back to its lush, shiny, stunning look. I know I made the right decision. Thanks to Svenson!"

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4 MY BIG LOVE	9 JUMPER
5 VANTAGE POINT	10 LIHIM ni ANTONIO

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5 LIHIM ni ANTONIO	9 10,000 BC

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1 SUPER FIGHTER	6 STEP UP 2
2 MY BIG LOVE	6 VANTAGE POINT
3 10,000 BC	7 JUMPER
4 MEET the SPARTANS	8 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND I

NOVALICHES

1 MEET the SPARTANS	3 MY BIG LOVE
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1 10,000 bc	
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3 UNTRACEABLE	
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DASMARINAS

1 10,000 B.C.	
2 MY BIG LOVE	
3 IN THE NAME of the KING / UNTRACEABLE	
4 MY BROTHER's WIFE	

IMUS

1 MEET the SPARTANS	
2 10,000 BC	
3 MY BIG LOVE	
4 MY BROTHER's WIFE	

ANGELES

1 10,000 B.C.	
2 MY BIG LOVE	
3 ASSASSINATION of JESSE JAMES	
4 THE MIST	

TARLAC

1 10,000 B.C.	
2 27 DRESSES	
3 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	

STARMILLS

1 10,000 B.C.	4 ASSASSINATION of JESSE JAMES
2 MY BIG LOVE	5 3:10 TO YUMA
3 THE MIST	6 JUNO

BACOLOD

1 10,000 B.C.	
2 MY BIG LOVE	
3 IN THE NAME of the KING	
4 JUNO	
5 THE MIST	
6 indieSine: SELDA	

ILOILO

1 10,000 B.C.	
2 MY BIG LOVE	
3 UNTRACEABLE	
4 THE BUCKET LIST	
5 P2	
6 DAN in REAL LIFE	

Inspired 'Madness'

THE NEW TV DRAMA SERIES, "Mad Men," made headlines recently when it beat a number of hit shows to win the first Drama Series plum in the 2007 Golden Globe Awards. That made the new show a "giant-killer" in TV buff book, and boosted it as the drama program to beat this year.

What makes "Mad Men" so award-worthy? It airs Thursdays on the Velvet cable channel, so we sought it recently to find out. Our verdict rocks!

"Mad Men" is a series about the US advertising industry in the halcyon '50s, when it was still gaining in power and influence.

Initially, this canonical would serve as other skin-pickings in terms of drama and preference. But, in the hands of the show's creative team, it blooms into an absorbing and insightful series about driven characters who bungee after wealth and power and strive to do it in the still evolving field of psychological image-making and hyper persuasive and manipulative (advertising).

Thus, "Mad Men" emerges as a psychological study of ambitious and even unscrupulous men, verifying the principle of normativity that has been operative in human interaction since caveman days—but, it does so with a difference, because the "territory" being fought over now is the human psyche.

Heart, blood and guts

This is all very cerebral, but the series makes sure that it adds heart, blood and guts to the equation. It does this by looking into the soul (readers's processing players' individual lives, needs and motivations.

In so doing, it reveals that the industry's movers and shakers are made up of a richly mixed cast of characters, united only by their common desire to create fortune and fame by more outwardly figuring out what makes the buying public tick.

There's the well-born upstart whose family has lost its fortune but not its influence. There's the senior industry veteran who's pulled himself up by his bootstraps. The boss who's a bit unpolished but he's become a leader in such a powerful and still evolving field that one practically dreads the American nation's coast for not (emulation) dreams.

Adding yet another revealing layer to the series' dramatic web is the production's interest in the principal characters' personal lives, and how they inform their activities at the office.

Finally, the story's '60s orientation makes it visually different from most other dramas on the tube. Due to these and other plus factors, "Mad Men" comes on strong and forward, well-

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

ceding their show's a lot of dramatic and acting merited as its "Madness."

Feedback

From Ishiel Ramos of Quezon City: It's good to see that more Filipino movies are being shown these days. But, I notice that many of them still tell stories we've heard before, and have predictable situations. Producers should know by now that many moviegoers want something new, especially now that it costs a lot to see a movie. If movies made now are like what we saw before, the revival of Filipino films may not be all that successful ..."

* * *

From Bea R. Mercano of Makati City: "Watching groups should include radio in their efforts to clean up the broadcast media. Some radio announcers and commentators treat their programs as theirs to do with as they please, to say whatever they want even if it's vulgar or shocking.

"They should realize that children are listening, and standards of civilized conduct have to be observed. Some of their comments are overlibelous. They should be more careful and think instead of what's good for the public ..."

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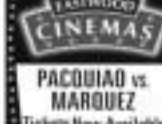

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GLORIETTA 4	1 STEP UP 2	2 MY BIG LOVE	3 10,000 B.C.				
	4 ACROSS THE UNIVERSE	5 VANTAGE POINT	6 MEET THE SPARTANS	7 ATONEMENT			
GREENBELT 1	1 10,000 B.C.	2 MEET THE SPARTANS					
GREENBELT 3	1 10,000 B.C.	2 MEET THE SPARTANS					
	3 ACROSS THE UNIVERSE	4 ATONEMENT	5 STEP UP 2				
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 MEET THE SPARTANS	2 STEP UP 2					
	3 10,000 B.C.	4 ATONEMENT	5 MY BIG LOVE				
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 10,000 B.C.	2 THE MIST	3 BUCKET LIST	4 ICE RUNNER			
MARKET! MARKET!	1 STEP UP 2	2 SUPERSIZE ME					
	3 MY BIG LOVE	4 10,000 B.C.	5 MEET THE SPARTANS				
TRINOMA	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 MEET THE SPARTANS	3 10,000 B.C.	4 ATONEMENT			
	5 VANTAGE POINT	6 SUPERSIZE ME	7 STEP UP 2				

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — Best Dress Exhibit, March 14-16, Glorietta Activity Center

Greenbelt — Bravo Filipino - A Fashion Show, March 15, 4 PM, Greenbelt 4 Fashion Walk

Alabang Town Center — Easter Fun at the Town, March 22, Town Plaza

Ayala Center Cebu — Kid-A-Hoots Parade, February 15 to March 16

Market! Market! — Easter Event, March 22 | Activity Center

Christian Life — Repertory Philippines presents RUBAIYAT IN 12, February 29 to March 16, 2008

Ayala Museum — Registration ongoing for Asian/Russian Business Art Workshops

Tri Noma — Concert Series, Coming Soon!, March 13 - 16, 10 a.m. - 9 p.m., 3rd Level Trinoma Mall

Cubao Expo Live at the Ayala Malls, Catch Cubao as she grooves to her hit songs "Bobby," "Woohoo," and "The Little Things," March 12, 6 p.m., Trinoma Activity Center

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Concert Series

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Slumberfly	February 29	Palazo 1	Palazo 3
Maxwell Flamboyant		Palazo 2	
Bubbles Toner Cortez	Palazo 1	Palazo 5	Palazo 6
TeeTorres	Palazo 4	Palazo 7	Palazo 9
Bonbon Hija Grabiel		Palazo 8	
Ayala Cartoon Cube			

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Glorietta · Greenbelt · Alabang Town Center · Ayala Center Cebu · Trinoma

'Sinemusikalye' in Malate

THE CINEMA COMMITTEE OF the National Commission for Culture and the Arts presents "Sinemusikalye," a novel multimedia audio-visual concert, 7 p.m. tomorrow at Remedios Circle in Malate.

The concert features videos by Lyle Incio and Noah Hipolito, to be manipulated by Ted Hermanes and Rhona Barrios; musical performances by Mideh Lopez and Culiph; R. Torgal and The Gangsta Orchestra (1 is of the best local improvising sound artists); and movie hits: Mmm, Star Meets, Trinity Whores, Elementes and The Children of Cathode Ray who will also score animation films by Sun Lee, and the Philippine premiere of Remedios' John Tucker "Years When I Was a Child," accompanied with a live score by the Middling Kinetic Inc.

Log on to http://www.sinemalaya.blogspot.com for details.

Show Time

Tonight

Aina Ono at Medi's Bar & Bistro, Level 3, Greenbelt 2. Call 757-4720 to 21.

Tomorrow

The Jerks at The Brass, Ayala St. Frtg. 2, Quezon City.

Mar. 15

Harry Connick Jr. and his Big Band at the PICC.

'Captain Fingers' and all-star jazz

REVIEW

Will Kennedy

By Pocholo Concepcion
Photos by Rudy Esparas

IT WAS A CELEBRATION OF THE pleasure of hearing exceptionally good music.

On Monday, first night of the main concerts in the 3rd Philippine International Jazz & Arts Festival at Solaire, Lee Ritenour played like a wizard with the magic wand that was his guitar.

With "an all-star" backup, Ritenour breezed through a lineup of eight songs that stretched to what seemed like unending bliss, prompted by wonderful exchanges of improvised solos.

Ritenour, also fondly called "Rit" and "Captain Fingers," was visibly delighted as he urged each musician to let go and play freely. That, he got... in large doses.

Drummer Will Kennedy, formerly of the Yellow Jackets, thundered through his solo and relentless pounding; bassist Melvin Davis, music director of Chaka Khan, was astounding with his remarkable grasp, which he played like a melodic lead instrument; and keyboardist Fattie Badiaru, whose Ola called "Baby Fingers," surprised everyone who thought she was merely the singer behind the Nik Kiaw staple, "Forget Me Nots."

ALEXIS Cordero

The songs were a delicious variety that bore traces of the blues, funk, swing, straight-ahead jazz and Brazilian melodies. They were alternately sweet, wild, meditative, imaginative. One number, a funky version of Jobim's "Agua de Beber," was scorching hot.

Earlier, Tillie Morore dished out scorching versions of such standards as "Fly Me to the Moon," "A Night in Tunisia," "Route 66" and a well-applauded "Umaganag Kay Gumilar" (with guest Harold Ignacio).

Opening the show was Jazz Jam, led by young saxophonist Alvin Carreon, who explained he was playing "no jazz," in impressing over dyslexia from a

Tillie Morore (left) sang Puerto Rican songs a first version of her disco hit...

...and a jazz version of her hit.

jazz-pop composer.

When the IV Jazzfest ends tomorrow night, it should be clear to the organizers and sponsors that there's no stopping this monumental event.

Featured tonight are the British band Incognito and the Japan-based Filipina singer Chanto with the Manila Dero Godfrey.

Taking the stage tomorrow are the French group Electric Six Gypsies, Toti Pantoja with Deepa Lemos, Anna Puyl, Tillie Morore, Chanto, the Brass Monkees and Lorraine Desmarais.

TALE DIVAS Are these three stunning performers, who are also seasoned entertainers

Gams, glitz and... gumption

By Rig-ori San Diego Jr.
Photos by Rudy Esparas

Pilita and the two Carmens show 'em what it's all about

LAST TIME WILLIAM THEIR BIMBY gray hairdo was in Taylor Dicks' concert in Greenbelt Makati.

On Friday and Saturday, fans of the "Golden Divas"—Pilita Corrales, Carmen Duncle and Carmen Soriano—ravaged in Silom Manoosa.

"They didn't stand cheering up the stairs," said Corrales. In a phone interview on Tuesday, she recounted: "Before my turn, I watched Duncle sings

CARMEN Pilita dishes out "The Greatest Performance of My Life."

and was floored someone ask: I wonder how old they are?"

Pilita readily owned up. "I'm 67." Friday was her birthday. The following night, Soriano declared that Pilita was the youngest among them. Cheers erupted. "Speak for yourself!"

Such easy rapport rubbed off on the audiences, who lapped up every number, especially Pilita's "The Greatest Performance of My Life," Soriano's "Free Me" and Corrales' "Kapantay ay Langit."

And oh, those ahs on the sustaining notes (ponies—which, by the way, they wore with some measure of mischief.

A 'great' crowd

"It was a great crowd," Pilita said, also on Tuesday. "It's a performer's best reward. You could hear a pin drop while we sang, but after each number, the applause would be deafening. It made me cry."

Soriano agreed, saying that it was, for her, "unforgettable." She had asked two close friend ladies to the gallery. "Where do you need to watch me?"

They responded, "Makiabot!"

Both, replies, the audience couldn't get enough of the divas. The encore number segued into a request portion.

It's think this show almost didn't happen. "Lynn (Tito Gonzalez, producer) Vic del Rosario P1,000," Pilita said. "I had lost that he wouldn't pull this off." Corrales joined that this was because Soriano wanted to first "get back in shape."

Here is planning an encore on May 2 at the SMX Convention Center in the SM Mall of Asia. Also in the works is a Cebu stop in May and a US tour in June, said Pilita.

Email: lifestyle.inquirer@hotmail.com

PILITA Corrales' finely honed skills. "Kapantay ay Langit."